

The Historical Trail

1993



The Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
Editor of *The Historical Trail*, 1968–1992

Yearbook of
Conference Historical Society
and
Commission on Archives and History
Southern New Jersey Conference
The United Methodist Church

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Rev. Charles A. Green, *Editor*

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The Historical Trail. 1993.

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and

Commission on Archives and History
Southern New Jersey Conference, The United Methodist Church

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Articles for *The Historical Trail* should be typewritten, double-spaced; articles submitted will not be returned unless accompanied by a postpaid addressed envelope. Address all correspondence to Rev. Charles A. Green, Editor, *The Historical Trail*, Box 6095, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19114-0695.

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Foreword

Mrs. Miriam L. G. Coffee

President, S.N.J. Conference Historical Society

History is tears; history is laughter; but most of all, history is people—especially people who leave monuments of good that extend into the future. *The Historical Trail*, each year, highlights people and places of the past that have had great influence upon Methodism, especially in the Southern New Jersey Conference.

Besides *The Historical Trail*, the Southern New Jersey Conference Historical Society sponsors a historical trip each year. In odd-numbered years, the one-day trip is within the state of New Jersey. In even-numbered years, the trip is longer and is out of state. Suggestions for the 1994 tour are being discussed. Be prepared for an *unusual* tour.

The Historical Trail is sent free to all members of the Southern New Jersey Conference Historical Society. Single membership is \$5.00 per year. Husband and wife membership is \$8.00 per year. Life membership is \$75.00 per person. A church membership is \$75.00. Checks made payable to the Southern New Jersey Conference Historical Society may be sent to the treasurer, Mrs. Edna M. Molyneaux, Treasurer, 768 East Garden Road #71, Vineland, New Jersey 08360.

In order to avoid having general business meetings while on a tour, our annual business meeting will be held on Friday, October 22, 1993, at the Marlton United Methodist Church, Marlton, New Jersey, with dinner served at 6:00 P.M. Following dinner will be the business meeting and a delightful program. More information will be sent to the local church historian.

Be sure to read all of the fine articles our new Editor, the Reverend Charles A. Green, has selected for 1993.



Dedication

To the Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
Editor, *The Historical Trail*
1968-1992

This issue of *The Historical Trail* is dedicated to the Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee, Editor of *The Historical Trail* from 1968 to 1992. The Rev. Dr. Coffee has served the Southern New Jersey Conference well in his many years of ministry, and even in retirement he continues to devote his skills and his energies to the work of the church. We appreciate his years of service with the Conference Historical Society, with the Commission on Archives and History, and especially with *The Historical Trail*.

Dr. Coffee carried on the work that was pioneered by our current Conference Historian, the Rev. Robert B. Steelman, when *The Historical Trail* was launched in 1962 as a short mimeographed booklet. From those humble beginnings, but with a grand vision of service to the Conference and the larger church, both the Rev. Mr. Steelman and the Rev. Dr. Coffee have developed this annual collection of historical information to its present state.

Today *The Historical Trail* finds its way into hundreds of homes, a number of churches, and some theological school libraries. Over the years it has brought to light information that was to be found nowhere else.

Last year Dr. Coffee retired as Editor of *The Historical Trail*. He remains as mentor, counselor, and advisor—ready to help whenever he is called upon. We are grateful for the vision and the work of both Bob Steelman and Hillman Coffee. Their work has helped to preserve the history of Southern New Jersey Methodism, and together they have inspired all of us to understand and appreciate the rich heritage of our church. It is with gratitude to both Bob Steelman and Hillman Coffee that we launch this 1993 issue of *The Historical Trail*, and it is with great pleasure and high esteem that we dedicate this issue to the Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee, Editor from 1968 to 1992.

Charles A. Green
Editor



Appreciation

To the Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
Editor, *The Historical Trail*, 1968-1992
and
to the Rev. Robert B. Steelman
Founding Editor, *The Historical Trail*, 1962-1967

Expressions of appreciation have come across our desk, and we present portions of these as part of our tribute to the Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee. We take this opportunity to thank the founding editor of *The Historical Trail*, the Rev. Robert B. Steelman, for his continued faithfulness and cooperation through the years. The Rev. Mr. Steelman is our Conference Historian, and he also serves as Archivist for the Northeastern Jurisdictional Commission on Archives and History.

For Hillman Coffee:

For more than thirty years it has been my privilege to work with Hillman in the historical interests of the Conference. Among many other things he has been a peerless editor. Not only was he the long-time Editor of *The Historical Trail*, but he also served as Associate Editor of *The Methodist Trail in New Jersey*, published in 1961, and was Editor of *What God Has Wrought*, the history of the Southern New Jersey Conference. Thank you, Hillman, for helping to bring to light the many-faceted history of our Conference.

Robert B. Steelman

For Hillman Coffee:

Hillman Coffee has been a person that I have always "looked up" to since I became the wife of a Methodist minister. In his own quiet way, Hillman has done a marvelous job as Editor of *The Historical Trail*—nothing ever seemed to be too much for him. We do appreciate all the many things that you have done, Hillman.

Eileen Steelman

For Hillman Coffee:

It is an honor and privilege to add our appreciation to Hillman Coffee for his fine service as editor of *The Historical Trail*. His dedication and tireless efforts over the years were truly remarkable.

Doreen and Sydney Dyer

For Hillman Coffee:

It has been a personal pleasure to know and fellowship with J. Hillman Coffee since becoming a member of this Annual Conference. He was one of the first Pastors to call and invite me to attend a prayer breakfast with other pastors, which gave me the chance to meet some of the other "brothers"; as a newcomer to the conference, it was a gracious welcome. But it was only after coming to Old Orchards, Cherry Hill, where his wife, Miriam, was the organist, that I got to know him a little better as he occasionally sang with our choir when we needed a tenor! I have thoroughly appreciated his cheerful spirit under all circumstances, and the faithful witness his life has been for Christ. As editor of *The Historical Trail* he was very helpful when I submitted a history of the Downer UMC (which he pastored for six months in 1941) for publication in the 1987 issue. Certainly Hillman is one of the kindest persons I've known, and I can truthfully say he is a "Christian gentleman," and it is a blessing to know him.

Alex Barros, Jr.

For Hillman Coffee:

Hillman has kept us all more interested in our Methodist heritage by way of *The Historical Trail*. He is a great seeker for the truth and writes and edits with great knowledge. Hillman is such fun to be with because of his sense of humor. He is faithful and diligent in attending meetings and representing our Commission [Archives and History]. We appreciate the many ways he has served the [S.N.J. Conference] Historical Society and the Commission on Archives and History.

Penny Moore

For Hillman Coffee:

It was Dr. J. Hillman Coffee that awakened my dormant interest in Methodist history. Away back in 1958 when he was our pastor in South Vineland, he often mentioned the activities of the [Conference Historical] Society. He was always interested in items for *The Historical Trail*, told of the May tours, and invited the congregation. He was truly a dedicated member, serving as president many times, always interested in the activities.

Edna M. Molyneaux

For Hillman Coffee and Bob Steelman:

When *The Historical Trail* started in 1962, David C. Evans was president of the Society, Bob Steelman, editor, and Dr. Coffee, archivist. Bob edited till 1968 when he became president. To date Bob has contributed nineteen fine articles—many thanks, Bob.

In 1968 Dr. Coffee became editor of *The Historical Trail* (continuing for twenty-five years) while still archivist for the Society. In 1977 he became president and Bob Steelman became historian. That was when Doreen [Dyer] and Edna [Molyneaux] got involved. To date Dr. Coffee has contributed seven fine articles—many thanks, Hillman.

Howard L. Cassaday

For Hillman Coffee and Bob Steelman:

Thanks for all you have contributed to *The Historical Trail* across many years. We are deeply indebted for your excellent leadership. "Well done, good and faithful servants."

Dorothy Lang

For Bob Steelman:

What would our S.N.J. Conference do to learn of our own Conference history, were it not for Bob Steelman? It was a joy and privilege to work—in a small way—on the committee which planned the book, *What God Has Wrought*. He is brilliant in the knowledge of churches within our Conference and is often called for quick reference information. As Conference Archivist, he is such a blessing to all of us. We do want to thank him for his many years of superb leadership in the Commission on Archives and History and the S.N.J. Conference Historical Society.

Penny Moore

For Bob Steelman:

Bob Steelman, who was the founding editor of *The Historical Trail*, exemplifies the title "Mr. United Methodist Historian."

Doreen and Sydney Dyer



Introduction

United Methodism's Silver Anniversary

It has been twenty-five years since The United Methodist Church was formed in Dallas in 1968. In this issue of *The Historical Trail*, we present an assessment of that union by the Rev. Dr. Frederick V. Mills, Sr., a clergy member of the Southern New Jersey Conference and professor of history at United Methodist-related LaGrange College in LaGrange, Georgia. The Rev. Dr. Mills is author of *Bishops by Ballot* (a careful analysis of the formation of the American episcopacy in the Protestant Episcopal Church) and a number of articles related to American church history.

The importance of Southern New Jersey in the events that led to union is shown in the article by the Rev. Robert B. Steelman, our Conference Historian. The Rev. Mr. Steelman is author of *What God Has Wrought* (the history of the Southern New Jersey Conference) and articles concerning Southern New Jersey Methodist history. The Rev. Mr. Steelman was the founding editor of *The Historical Trail*.

The Southern New Jersey Conference has elected the Rev. Dr. Charles A. Sayre as its representative to every General Conference since 1964, and the Rev. Dr. Sayre is the only surviving ministerial delegate to the 1968 Uniting Conference from the Southern New Jersey Conference. In this issue the Rev. Dr. Sayre presents his reflections, twenty-five years later, on that historic event. The Rev. Dr. Sayre was pastor of Haddonfield United Methodist Church until his retirement in 1990.

At the Uniting Conference which brought into being The United Methodist Church in 1968, the preacher for the uniting service was the Rev. Dr. Albert C. Outler. In this issue we present the complete text of the Rev. Dr. Outler's sermon. The Rev. Dr. Outler was professor of historical theology at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. He translated *The Confessions of Saint Augustine* for the series *The Library of Christian Classics*; edited the book *John Wesley*, a collection of Wesley's writings in the series *A Library of Protestant Thought*, published by Oxford University Press; edited the four volumes of Wesley's sermons for *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, published by Abingdon Press; and wrote a number of articles and books, including *Evangelism in the Wesleyan Spirit* and *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*.

For many years the Rev. Dr. Frederick E. Maser has been known as an authority on Methodist history. The list of even his recent writings is too long to include here, but we may mention his latest book, *The Story of John Wesley's Sisters, or Seven Sisters in Search of Love*. This book, first published in 1988, is already in its second printing. In this issue of *The Historical Trail*, we are pleased to include an essay by the Rev. Dr. Maser concerning Susanna Wesley, the mother of John and Charles Wesley. This

article is reprinted from a leaflet originally published by Methodist Evangelistic Materials in Nashville. The original bears no copyright notice or date, and it is reprinted, with one or two alterations by the author, with the author's permission. The Rev. Dr. Maser once served as pastor of historic Saint George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia. He was a member of the editorial board and was one of the writers of *The History of American Methodism*, and he contributed several articles to *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism*. He writes the "Discovery" feature for the quarterly journal *Methodist History*, and last year he was awarded honorary life membership in The Charles Wesley Society.

One of the oldest Methodist churches in Southern New Jersey is the Pemberton United Methodist Church. This church was named a United Methodist Historic Site in 1992. At a special Aldersgate service commemorating the heart-warming experience of John Wesley and anticipating nomination of Pemberton church as a historic site, the Rev. Dr. John R. Bowering presented a sermon entitled "To Serve the Present Age." The Rev. Dr. Bowering was pastor of the Pemberton church from 1984 to 1988 and now serves as pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Bayville and Ocean Gate United Methodist Church. The Rev. Dr. Bowering is a life member of the Southern New Jersey Conference Historical Society.

At the back of this issue is some information about the Southern New Jersey Conference Historical Society, along with a membership application. We invite all our readers to join the Conference Historical Society, and we look forward to serving you through the pages of this booklet in the years to come.

For assistance in the preparation of this booklet we are grateful to those who have contributed articles; to the members and friends of both the Conference Historical Society and the Commission on Archives and History who have helped with gathering information and other materials; to the Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee, past editor; to the Rev. Robert B. Steelman, founding editor and Conference Historian; to Mrs. Miriam L. G. Coffee, President, S.N.J. Conference Historical Society; to the Rev. Frank A. Robinson, Pastor, Pemberton United Methodist Church; to the Rev. Donald W. Tabler, Pastor, First United Methodist Church, Cape May; to InfoServe, the toll-free information service of The United Methodist Church; to Wanda Smith, secretary to the Rev. Dr. Albert C. Outler and to the Rev. Dr. Richard P. Heitzenrater; to Richard Peck and The United Methodist Publishing House; to Deborah Jerrod and United Methodist New Service; to Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University; to Mark C. Shenise at the General Commission on Archives and History in Madison, New Jersey; to George E. Goodwin, photographer; and to many others who have helped in many ways.

In 1968 the Evangelical United Brethren and The Methodist Church became The United Methodist Church. Each brought to the union a distinctive heritage, but both brought to the new church a common commitment

and a common understanding of the gospel. Thus the glory of this merger—and of this year's twenty-fifth birthday party—is the blending of our traditions, rather than the blurring of our distinctions.

But before we blow out the candles at this year's party, let us remember the many divisions that still exist within the Methodist family. Some were caused by bitter racial strife; some were caused by deep differences over social issues; some were produced by strong convictions about the direction in which the church should go; some were based on matters of doctrine or polity. Those divisions—and remnants of the issues that brought them about—still linger, and they are much older than the quarter-century-old “united” Methodism. Two are marking significant anniversaries of their own, and these observances cause us to be cautious in our own celebrations of unity: The Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America (later called the Wesleyan Methodist Church and now the Wesleyan Church) was founded 150 years ago, in 1843. Benjamin Titus Roberts (1824–1893) died one hundred years ago this year; Roberts was founder and bishop of the Free Methodist Church, formed in 1859, the year after Roberts had been expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church. The United Methodist Church restored Roberts's ministerial orders posthumously in 1984, but the division between our two churches stands nevertheless.

Happy Birthday, United Methodism. But do not forget how divided we still are.

Charles A. Green
Editor



List of Issues of *The Historical Trail*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Volume</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Editor</i>
1962	1	1	1	Rev. Robert B. Steelman
1963	2	1	2	Rev. Robert B. Steelman
1964	3	1	3	Rev. Robert B. Steelman
1965	4	2	1	Rev. Robert B. Steelman
1966	5	2	2	Rev. Robert B. Steelman
1967	6	2	3	Rev. Robert B. Steelman
1968	7	2	4	Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1969	8			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee

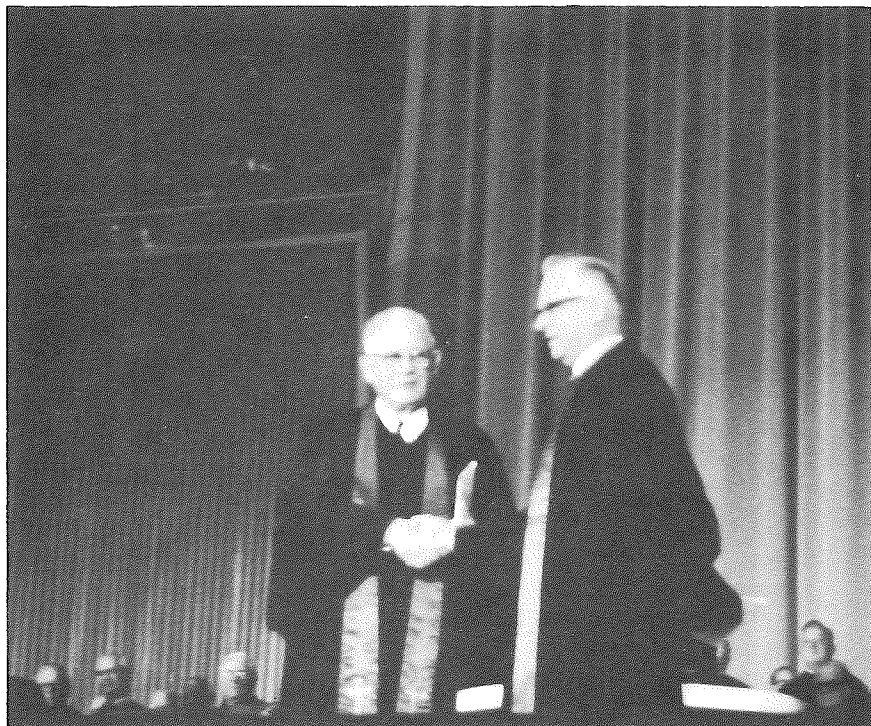
[No issue in 1970.]

1971	9			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1972	10			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1973	11			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1974	12			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
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1977	15			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1978	16			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1979	17			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1980	18			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1981	19			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1982	20			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1983	21			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1984	22			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1985	23			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee

[No issue in 1986.]

1987	24			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1988	25			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1989	26			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1990	27			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1991	28			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1992	29			Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee
1993	30			Rev. Charles A. Green





Bishop Reuben H. Mueller, E.U.B. (left),
and Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke, Methodist (right),
clasp hands and declare the union forming
The United Methodist Church
in Dallas, Texas, on Tuesday, April 23, 1968.
*Photo courtesy of United Methodist Communications
and Interpreter art department.*

The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of The United Methodist Church 1968-1993

Rev. Dr. Frederick V. Mills, Sr.

On Tuesday, April 23, 1968, in Memorial Auditorium, Dallas, Texas, delegates representing The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren brought into being The United Methodist Church. In a service that included prayer, confession, affirmation of faith, and a sermon entitled "Visions and Dreams," the declaration of union was read, to which the congregation responded with "Amen."¹ Symbolizing this merger, Bishops Reuben H. Miller and Lloyd C. Wicke joined hands, as did the delegates representing 10,289,000 Methodists and 738,000 Evangelical United Brethren. A prayer of commitment and a covenant on behalf of The United Methodist Church concluded the service:

We are no longer our own, but thine. Put us to what thou wilt, rank us with whom thou wilt; put us to doing, put us to suffering; let us be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee; let us be full, let us be empty; let us have all things, let us have nothing; we freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art ours, and we are thine. So be it. And the covenant which we have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.²

The United Methodist Church that came into being in 1968 marked the culmination of a historic association among nine of the larger bodies in the Wesleyan tradition: the Methodist Episcopal Church; the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; the Methodist Protestant Church; the Church of the United Brethren in Christ; the Evangelical Association; the United Evangelical Church; the Evangelical Church; The Methodist Church; and the Evangelical United Brethren Church. This meant that for the first time in over a century a majority of Americans in the tradition of John Wesley found themselves in one organization. With the exception of the larger black Methodist denominations and a number of smaller ones, the people who called themselves the heirs of Wesley were more than ever one.³

It is true that although all Methodism is not yet one, the union achieved in 1968 was the result of many experiences, years of study, previous mergers,

¹J. Bruce Behney and Paul H. Eller, edited by Kenneth W. Krueger, *The History of the Evangelical United Brethren* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 392; Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), 429. See pp. 33-40 of this issue of *The Historical Trail* for Dr. Albert C. Outler's sermon, "Visions and Dreams."

²*Journal of the 1968 General Conference: The United Methodist Church*, 363. This prayer is based on the Covenant Prayer in John Wesley's Covenant Service.

³Norwood, 426.

and an expression of the ecumenical commitment which each of the respective denominations shared. Indeed, the 1968 merger was a major example demonstrating the reversal of a nineteenth-century trend which produced separations and divisions within church bodies. The coalescing of the partners in the Plan of Union in 1968 forming The United Methodist Church has provided a model for other religious bodies to study. While it did not resolve all the differences between the parties, it did provide a means to do so. It is this achievement which gives dramatic substance to a statement of the late Reverend Dr. Albert C. Outler that "Every denomination in a divided and broken Christendom is an *ecclesiola in via*, but Methodists have a peculiar heritage that might make the transitive character of our ecclesiastical existence not only tolerable but positively proleptic."⁴

The historic achievement in 1968 involved the convergence of two denominations with deep roots in the American evangelical revival tradition. This heritage is defined by a firm commitment to the Bible, an emphasis on conversion to the will of God, and the place of emotion as well as reason in the exercise of personal and corporate faith. A high priority is a disciplined life in matters of faith and practice. Further, in terms of ministry the evangelical revival, which had expression in Great Britain as well as America, stressed the presentation of the gospel to the masses in terms they understood. This on occasion was done in a rousing and dramatic fashion. The role of circuit rider preachers carrying this message to people on the western frontier and the emergence of the camp meeting facilitated the dissemination of the evangelical revival emphasis.

The background of this tradition in American Christianity stems from the preaching of several ministers. Theodore J. Frelinghuysen, born and educated in Germany, came to America in 1717 to serve a Dutch Reformed church in New Jersey. To challenge the lax state of religion, Frelinghuysen adopted an evangelistic preaching style, calling for conviction of sin and for conversion. William Tennent and his two sons, Gilbert and William, Jr., ministered among Presbyterians and Congregationalists in a similar style. Jonathan Edwards at Northampton, Massachusetts, was another leader in what became the Great Awakening, but in a more restrained and intellectually sophisticated manner. In 1740, George Whitefield, an Anglican priest and at the time a close associate of John and Charles Wesley, visited Edwards in Northampton. Whitefield presented the gospel most dramatically to the masses on both sides of the Atlantic. By the time of his death in 1770, he had become a major force in generating the evangelical ethos in which Methodism flourished.⁵

⁴Geoffrey Wainwright, *The Ecumenical Moment: Crisis and Opportunity for the Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), 221.

⁵Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), s.v. "Revivalism," by Stuart C. Henry and s.v. "United Methodism," by Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.

The second feature evident in the formation of The United Methodist Church is catholicity, which John Wesley enunciated. In his Sermon LV he declared, "Methodism, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church, the religion of the Church of England. . . . This is the religion of the primitive Church, of the whole Church in the purest ages."⁶ Wesley believed the Anglican church held the richest and best of the Christian tradition. He did not exclude from the church catholic those who sometimes preached unscriptural ideas or failed or neglected to "duly administer" the sacraments. In a similar vein Philip William Otterbein and Jacob Albright, the respective leaders in the formation of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association, both endeavored to avoid the identification of their movements with a new church or sect. Wesley consciously associated his views with those of the church Fathers, and Otterbein and Albright derived inspiration from pietist tradition. But their thinking converged in the concept of a universal church. It was this common characteristic variously expressed that made possible the merger in 1968.⁷

During the more than 150 years preceding the 1968 merger, Methodists, United Brethren, and Evangelicals had cooperated with each other on a range of activities, from the exchange of fraternal delegates at general conferences to holding camp meetings. This close association began at least as early as December 1784, when at the Christmas Conference, held in Baltimore, Maryland, Otterbein participated in the ordination of Francis Asbury, at Asbury's request. At that time, Otterbein and Martin Boehm were recognized leaders in a religious revival among the German-speaking peoples in the middle states. While Methodists organized themselves in 1784 into the Methodist Episcopal Church, it was 1800 before those associated with Otterbein began annual ministerial meetings from which emerged the name United Brethren in Christ. John Wesley had sent *The Sunday Service* (a revision of the English *Book of Common Prayer*) and an abridged Articles of Religion. American Methodists created a *Discipline*, which contained the Articles of Religion, Wesley's General Rules, the Ritual, and material on church government. Although the United Brethren developed their own identity, they were strongly influenced by the Methodist system. That discussions or negotiations were held between these two denominations

⁶John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Volume 3; Sermons III, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 585-586; Sermon 112, "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel." See also *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, Vol. VII (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872, and later reprints), 423-424; Sermon CXXXII, "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel near the City Road, London." See also John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, Vol. I (New York: Lane and Tippet, 1847), 493-494; Sermon LV, "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel, near the City Road, London"; preached on Monday, April 21, 1777.

⁷Norwood, 437.

in 1809–1814, 1829, 1867–1871, 1903–1917, 1946, and 1949 is another example of their mutual respect and compatibility.⁸

Those known as "Albright's People" were centered in eastern Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. Although Jacob Albright was of a Lutheran background, he took a similar pietistic approach to Christian faith as did Otterbein, who was from a Reformed Church background. Under Albright's leadership, three small independent classes were formed by 1800. Aided by John Walter and Abraham Liesser, Albright held an annual conference November 13–15, 1807, near Kleinfeltersville, Pennsylvania. In the organization of their work, a discipline based upon the Methodist *Discipline* was authorized. After Albright died on May 18, 1808, George Miller, John Walter, and John Dreisbach continued the work. In 1816, in the home of Dreisbach with twelve ministerial delegates present, the name Evangelical Association was adopted. Unlike the United Brethren who adapted to the cultural ethos of America, the Evangelical Association held firmly to the German language and tradition. Although the use of English was more common in the 1830s, its minority status among Evangelicals was still an issue of tension until World War I.⁹

All three denominations experienced growth during the nineteenth century. The Methodist Episcopal Church recorded 18,000 members in 1784; 64,894 in 1800; 994,000 in 1860; 2,930,000 in 1900; and 4,394,000 in 1920. The United Brethren claimed about 10,000 members in 1813; 61,000 in 1857; 241,000 in 1900; and 343,000 in 1920. The Evangelical Association had 166,000 members in 1900. Further growth was evident as each entered the fields of publishing, education, and missions. The Methodist Episcopal Church traditionally dated its formal entrance into publishing in 1789, and the United Brethren and the Evangelical Association in 1815. The Methodists opened Cokesbury College in 1787 and by 1844 had promoted the founding of thirteen institutions of higher learning. The United Brethren opened Otterbein University in 1845, and the Evangelical Association established Albright Seminary in 1853. In a sense Methodism in America was a missionary enterprise from its inception, but a formal Missionary Society was created in 1819. The Evangelical Association and the United Brethren did likewise in 1839 and 1841, respectively.¹⁰

A countertrend to the dynamic growth and creative service of the three Methodist-style denominations resulted in several schisms in the nineteenth century. Within the Methodist Episcopal Church agitation for lay rights and over the appointment system (the bishops assigned ministers to their appointments) led to protest. By the 1828 General Conference it became evident that the denomination was not going to reform. Schism occurred, and congregations using the name Associated Methodist Churches were formed.

⁸Behney and Eller, 389; Norwood, 426–427.

⁹Norwood, 111–113.

¹⁰Norwood, 115, 216–220, 305–315, 331–337, 415–416.

Two years later this body became known as the Methodist Protestant Church, which had 41,600 members in 1840. A non-episcopal form of church government that included lay representation was created, and annual conferences assumed the duty of stationing ministers. A second major schism occurred in 1844, when the Methodist Episcopal Church, meeting in General Conference, voted to divide and form two General Conferences. This split was prompted by the issues of slavery and of the authority of bishops. Although this action was preceded by great agitation and subsequently was subjected to heated criticism, a later view is that the 1844 General Conference exhibited Christian charity in a difficult and baffling situation.¹¹ The result was the separation of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; by 1860 the southern church numbered 757,000 members.¹² Both the United Brethren and the Evangelical Association held strong anti-slavery positions and did not experience a division over the issue. But neither body had large numbers of members in the region that favored slavery. Nevertheless, in 1894 the Evangelical Association did suffer a schism over the question of bishops' authority, powers, and activities; this schism led to the formation of the United Evangelical Church.¹³

The twentieth century witnessed the reversal of the trend toward schism with the successful completion of church mergers and the creation of ecumenical councils. In 1911 the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church created a joint commission that produced an acceptable plan of union, adopted in 1922 with the creation of the Evangelical Church. In the 1930s the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Church entered into negotiations that came to fruition in 1946. The Evangelical United Brethren Church formed in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, adopted a Plan of Union that was submitted to and accepted by the two denominations' general conferences. The United Brethren also held a referendum on the merger among its members. When Bishops A. R. Clippinger of the United Brethren and John S. Stamm of the Evangelical Church presented the Declaration of Union, it represented the convergence of 705,000 members into one church. Within this same period both the Evangelicals and the United Brethren participated in the Federal Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches.¹⁴

For the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church, the road to reunion began on August 17, 1876, at Cape May, New Jersey. The Cape May Conference did not achieve unity, but it did initiate fraternal relations between the two main

¹¹William Warren Sweet, *Methodism in American History* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1933; Revised and Enlarged Edition, 1954), p. 259. For a full discussion see Chapters 12–13, pp. 229–275.

¹²Norwood, 259.

¹³J. Alton Templin, Allen D. Breck, and Martin Rist, eds., *The Methodists, Evangelical and United Brethren Churches in the Rockies, 1850–1976* (The Rocky Mountain Conference of The United Methodist Church, 1977), 555.

¹⁴Behney and Eller, 388.

branches of Methodism—the M.E. Church and the M.E. Church, South. In 1898 in Foundry Methodist Church, Washington, D.C., a joint commission on federation was created. The formation of this joint commission led to the issuance of a joint hymnal in 1905. In 1920 the Joint Commission on Unification offered a plan that identified three central issues: the powers of the general conference, a plan for jurisdictions, and the status of black members. It took three attempts to achieve agreement on these issues, and it was not until the 1930s that the Methodist Protestants, who had been responsive to overtures from the Methodist Episcopal Church as early as 1908, returned to the conference table. In 1934 the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Protestant Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, formally created commissions to study reunion. These agencies acting together produced a plan for the formation of The Methodist Church. There was to be one general conference, six jurisdictional conferences (five geographical and one for Negroes), and equal representation for ministers and laity at all conference levels. The office of the bishop would continue; a judicial council would be final arbiter of church law; and the Articles of Religion would be retained. The Uniting Conference was held in Kansas City, April 26 – May 10, 1939. Bishop John M. Moore for the southern church, Bishop Edwin H. Hughes for the northern church, and (newly-designated) Bishop James H. Straughn of the Methodist Protestants presented the Plan of Union, which was adopted. At unification the Methodist Episcopal Church had 4,684,444 members; the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 2,847,351; and the Methodist Protestant Church, 197,996.¹⁵

A factor that aided in bringing a fundamental change in the direction of several denominations in the Methodist family from one of competition and rivalry to one of acceptance and reconciliation was cooperation in many interdenominational organizations. Methodists, like Evangelicals and United Brethren, had cooperated in the Federal Council of Churches, the International Missionary Council, the Commission on Chaplains, Religion in American Life, and the International Council on Religious Education. This twentieth-century trend, combined with the nineteenth-century associations, was important in the development of trust and rapport among these bodies. Hence in 1946 when Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam appeared before the first Evangelical United Brethren General Conference as a fraternal delegate and reported “he had been authorized by the Board of Bishops of The Methodist Church to state that if any time after [EUB] had come far enough in our own union that [EUB] would care to open negotiations with them, they would be pleased to receive such overtures.” Subsequently the

¹⁵This conference is covered by John M. Moore, *The Long Road to Methodist Union* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1943); James H. Straughn, *Inside Methodist Union* (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1958); and Harry E. Woolever, *The High-road of Methodism* (Washington, D.C.: Commission on Methodist Union, 1939).

Evangelical United Brethren General Conference created a Commission on Church Federation, which held conversations with The Methodist Church. In 1958, the General Conference instructed this commission to continue their discussions with the Methodists “for the purpose of developing possible bases of consideration for union.”¹⁶

The first meeting of a joint commission of the two denominations was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, March 6–7, 1958, to develop a procedure to plan actively for a merger. Two decisions were made: (1) the Methodists and the Evangelical United Brethren proceeded with a plan for union; and (2) the Methodists discontinued discussions with the Episcopalians, which had been ongoing since the 1940s. This meant that part of the Methodist heritage steeped in the Anglicanism of John and Charles Wesley was put on hold. “Methodism at a fork in the road chose the way more congenial to its Pietist than to its Anglican heritage.”¹⁷ As discussions continued between Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren, several problem issues were identified. The marked difference in the numerical size of the respective denominations, a name for the new church, the nature of episcopacy, the place of the district superintendent, and the number of ministerial orders were all set forth.

Between 1958 and 1962 there were eleven formal consultations between the major parties, and at three such meetings the full commissions of both denominations were involved. In addition, there were eighteen subcommittees appointed to contribute to the drafting of a Plan of Union. Dr. Paul A. Washburn was appointed a full-time director in 1964, and he proved to be a tireless worker. Additional meetings of the commissions and the executive committee, along with the subcommittees, produced a Plan and Basis of Union that was published in April 1966 and presented to the respective general conferences meeting simultaneously in the Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, November 6, 1966. Here parallel meetings of the respective general conferences were held across the hall from each other. The majority of the delegates in both bodies felt that the cause of unity and the advantages of union were reinforced by the opportunity to realize a Christian ideal. The Methodist concept of bishops’ tenure for life was retained, but bishops were not to be considered a third order of the clergy. Superintendents would be appointed by the bishops rather than elected by annual conferences. Powerful pressures were exerted to secure a firmer commitment to bring about the integration of Central Jurisdiction conferences by 1972. Four black annual conferences had already been integrated into white conferences, and the expectation was that twelve remaining conferences in the Southeastern and South Central Jurisdictions would be integrated by the target date. When the Plan and Basis of Union was put to a vote in the respective general conferences, the Methodists approved 749 to 40, and the Evan-

¹⁶Behney and Eller, 389; Norwood, 441.

¹⁷Norwood, 427.

gelical United Brethren were positive by 325 to 88. With a two-thirds vote of annual conferences needed, the Evangelical United Brethren gave a 70% endorsement, and the Methodists concurred by an 87% vote. The name of this new church was to be The United Methodist Church.¹⁸

The birth of The United Methodist Church received high praise then and now as reported in *Christian Century*. It was "a high and holy hour"; and commenting on Dr. Outler's sermon *Christian Century* asserted "the day of great preaching is not over!" But the same editorial noted the ferment that soon surfaced within the conference itself over "establishment" recommendations, from Black Methodists for Church Renewal, and from seminary students who questioned capital expenditures over the needs of "the poor and powerless." In a subsequent editorial, the same magazine concluded that "just as at Pentecost some believed while others accused the disciples of being 'drunk on new wine,' so there were varied reactions to the work of the uniting conference."¹⁹ But concerns for the merger had been voiced in the *Christian Century* before the November 1966 General Conferences that set the stage for the uniting conference in Dallas, by Professor Paul M. Minus, Jr., of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, and Professor Arthur C. Core of United Theological Seminary in the same state. While not opposing the Plan of Union, their plea was for more time to discuss and to promote understanding throughout both denominations of the implications of what was viewed as a "theologically and strategically sound" union. In particular they were concerned about the need to create "new patterns" for a new church rather than a combining of the "old patterns" of two denominations.²⁰ Although this plea did not impede the progress toward merger in 1968, there are echoes of Minus's and Core's concern, reflected in Paul Washburn's *An Unfinished Church* (1984), in which he argues that the way to evaluate The United Methodist Church is not to compare it with its pre-merger parts, but to measure it against the New Testament images of the church such as "the Body of Christ" or "the People of God."²¹

In current articles celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the uniting conference of 1968, the positive features of the event remain. Yet, a view persists that there is work to be done to realize a renewal of the spirit in the sense of a truly catholic, truly evangelical, and truly reformed church. Susan M. Eltscher's article "Twenty-five Years Together: 1968-1993" is a celebration of the historic event and the planned April 23-25, 1993, remembrance

held in Dallas.²² But in an analytical article entitled "25 Years After Union: Was It a Good Move?" Warren J. Hartman, James M. Ault, and James S. Thomas express their views. Their collective judgment is that the 1968 merger was a positive accomplishment. It contributed to the elimination of the Central Jurisdiction, strengthened the ecumenical cause, and posed possibilities for greatly expanded outreach and service. But while all the principals in the merger had appreciation for the traditions, customs, and practices of the others, the quest for a "truly new church that would infuse every congregation in our new church with a new vitality and spirit" is still to be realized. This does not mean that progress in this direction has not been made. The recent expression of the Bishops' Pastoral Letter, "Vital Congregations—Faithful Disciples," is clearly a step toward "new vitality."²³

The sense among several of the authors who celebrate the formation of The United Methodist Church in 1968 that there is still work to be done is in itself positive. This is the record of ecumenical development. The merger of the three major branches of Methodism in 1939 identified more carefully than previously the question of black Methodists. In time this issue was creatively addressed in 1964, and eventually the Central Jurisdiction was eliminated.²⁴ In 1922 the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church reversed the misunderstandings of 1894 by the creation of the Evangelical Church. In short, the historical record is on the side of those within the Methodist family who recognize and squarely face the issues of their time. Moreover, the authors who are most familiar with the merger in 1968, whether from the Methodist Church, Evangelical United Brethren, or Central Jurisdiction background, are all positive about the future of their church. This in itself bodes well for the emergence of a "new vitality and new spirit" for The United Methodist Church.



¹⁸Norwood, 428-429.

¹⁹J. Claude Evans, "The United Methodist Church Is Born," *Christian Century* 85 (May 15, 1968): 642-643; J. Claude Evans, "United Methodist Action," *Christian Century* 85 (May 22, 1968): 673-675.

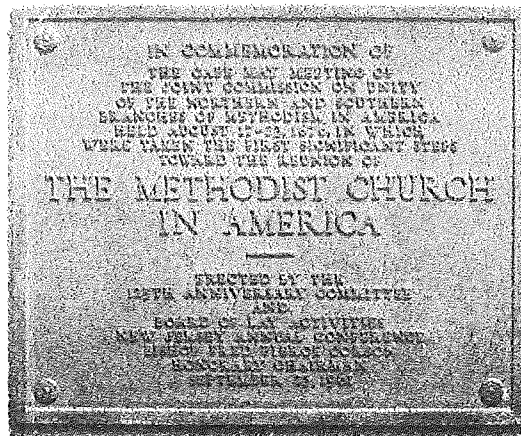
²⁰Paul M. Minus, Jr., and Arthur C. Core, "The 'United Methodist Church': Critique and Proposal," *Christian Century* 83 (February 9, 1966): 174-175, 190.

²¹Paul Washburn, *An Unfinished Church: A Brief History of the Union of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 175.

²²Susan M. Eltscher, "Twenty-five Years Together: 1968-1993," *Interpreter* (January 1993): 8-9.

²³Warren J. Hartman, James Mase Ault, and James S. Thomas, "25 Years After Union: Was It a Good Move?" *Circuit Rider* (December 1992/January 1993), 4-11.

²⁴James S. Thomas, *Methodism's Racial Dilemma: The Story of the Central Jurisdiction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).



Cape May Monument

The monument stands in front of First United Methodist Church.

The wording on the plaque reads:

In commemoration of
the Cape May meeting of
The Joint Commission on Unity
of the Northern and Southern
branches of Methodism in America
held August 17-23, 1876, in which
were taken the first significant steps
toward the reunion of
The Methodist Church
in America

—
Erected by the
125th Anniversary Committee
and
Board of Lay Activities
New Jersey Annual Conference
Bishop Fred Pierce Corson
Honorary Chairman
September 23, 1961

The Contributions of Southern New Jersey Methodists to a United Methodism

An Essay on the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of The United Methodist Church

Rev. Robert B. Steelman

This article is not meant to be a definitive history based on an exhaustive historical study. It is rather a reflective essay based on documents previously researched and writings available to historians today to which the reader will be referred.

To celebrate unity and the expressions of organic unity which have occurred in the life of our denomination is at once to be made aware of the many divisions which have happened across the little more than 200 years of our history since the 1784 Christmas Conference. As early as 1792 there was the O'Kelly schism over the overt powers of Bishop Asbury. The mid-nineteenth century saw the rise of such denominations as the Free Methodist and Wesleyan Methodist Churches with the northern Methodist Church's official stand on slavery as one of the contributory causes. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the separatism of the holiness movement lead to the establishment of such denominations as the Church of the Nazarene, Pilgrim Holiness Church, Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) and the Holiness Methodist Church. In all of these, Methodist ministers and laity played some part.

The existence today of such major Methodist Churches as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) and Christian Methodist Episcopal, formerly called Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME), as well as several smaller black Methodist bodies all with long and distinguished histories reveals yet another aspect of Methodist divisions. The struggle for full equality by those blacks who remained in the parent denominations, the difficulty of removing the segregated Central Jurisdiction from The Methodist Church, and the continuing problem of open itineracy for all reveals that unity within even United Methodism still has a long way to go.

Lay rights and women's rights within the church have also had a long battle to achieve the unity that should be demonstrated within the Christian community. Today, theological stances between liberals and conservatives, and positions taken on social issues such as abortion and homosexuality, threaten yet other cleavages. So the struggle for unity is not at an end. It is to be hoped that the future of God's church will see yet more unity and less division.

The above remarks could make this essay a far-reaching one and should inspire still others. Since this is an essay on the twenty-fifth anniversary of

the union that produced The United Methodist Church, I will principally relegate my comments to the divisions creating the Methodist Protestant Church and the Methodist Episcopal Churches, north and south, with the resulting reunion of those three bodies in 1939. Then will follow the 1968 merger between The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church. In all of these divisions and unions we will seek to discover what role was played by what is now the Southern New Jersey Conference.

While the 1792 O'Kelly schism had little lasting effect in the life of the Methodist Episcopal Church, some of its underlying emphasis continued as an undercurrent within the church. James O'Kelly, one of Asbury's presiding elders, led a group who wanted to restrict the appointive powers of the bishop and allow for a minister to appeal his appointment to the conference.

As early as the 1812 General Conference petitions calling for elected presiding elders were introduced. By 1820, there came to be tied into the desire for elected presiding elders, the right of a preacher to appeal his appointment, and the right of laity for representation in the District, Annual, and General Conferences, which were then made up solely of clergy. All this was seen as democratic reform at a time when democratic idealism was sweeping the Country.

The "Reformers," as they were called, actually won the vote at the 1820 General Conference for elected presiding elders. The strong objection by the bishops, however, led to a suspension of the new rule pending a vote in each Annual Conference and a vote in the 1824 General Conference. The 1824 General Conference was nearly equally divided between the Reformers and those opposed to change. By a 63-61 vote the Reformers lost, and the tide was irrevocably turned against them. By the time the 1828 General Conference convened in Pittsburgh there was no chance for any Reformed victory. In fact, many Reformers were voted out of the church in some conferences. Following the 1828 General Conference the first major division in the Church occurred, leading to the formation of the Methodist Protestant Church.

While not at all the center of Reformist views, nevertheless southern New Jersey Methodism produced strong leaders in the Reformist cause. William Smith Stockton, native of Burlington, author and editor, published, first in Trenton and later in Philadelphia, the *Wesleyan Repository and Religious Intelligencer*, later called *Mutual Rights*. This was a leading paper promoting Reformist views. This prominent layman was also present at the 1828 convention of Reformers which organized the Associated Methodist Church, forerunner of the Methodist Protestant Church. He was also present and was elected assistant secretary of the 1830 Conference which organized the Methodist Protestant Church. His son, Thomas Hewlings Stockton, born in Mount Holly, became a leading minister in the Methodist Protestant Church, compiler of its first hymnal in 1837, and four-time Chaplain of the United States House of Representatives. Asa Shinn, Samuel Budd of Pemberton, and Sylvester Hutchinson of Hightstown were other leading

New Jersey clergy who joined the Methodist Protestants and are listed among their founders.

The Methodist Protestant Church became a small but significant church in Methodism, numbering just under 200,000 members at unification in 1939.

A larger division of the church took place in 1844. The issue was slavery. Here the church divided between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It does not seem necessary here to outline the causes that led to this division. The story has been told and retold many times. At issue was a General Rule in force since 1789, forbidding slave-trading, not slaveholding. Also at issue was a disciplinary statement on slavery adopted in 1796 and revised in 1816, which declared slavery a "great evil," prohibited slave-holders from holding church office, and prohibited ministers from owning slaves if the ministers lived in a state where emancipation was possible. The crisis that was precipitated at the 1844 General Conference was over slaves inherited by Bishop James O. Andrews of Georgia and those owned by his wife. Debate was long and often acrimonious. Finally, the General Conference voted that Bishop Andrew "desist from the exercise of this office [the office of bishop] so long as this impediment [slavery] remains." Two days later the church was divided. Slavery divided the Methodist Episcopal Church.

How did New Jersey Methodists react? The Rev. Dr. Robert J. Williams, in his definitive study, *A Century of Compromise: New Jersey Methodists on the Status and Role of Blacks in the Church and Society*, clearly shows that throughout this period New Jersey Methodists consistently voted to support the status quo, voting unanimously against a memorial to outlaw slaveholding in the church. At the 1844 General Conference, the New Jersey delegation split its vote on the important vote that divided the church. Three of its delegates—Isaac Winner, John S. Porter, and John K. Shaw—voted with the majority, while Thomas Neal and Thomas Sovereign sided with the south. The alternate delegate was John McClintock, Dickinson professor, later an editor, and first president of Drew Theological Seminary. He did not get to vote on this important matter, but he was undoubtedly the leading anti-slavery exponent in the New Jersey Conference.

The church was now divided. How did southern New Jersey Methodists contribute to its reunion? Although the General Conference voted to divide the church, once division settled in the north looked upon the southern branch as though in rebellion. If unity was to take place the northerners thought the southerners would have to come home. Fraternal delegates from the south were rebuffed by the northern General Conference, and the north sent none to the south.

Once the Civil War was over, however, and the nation prepared to celebrate its Centennial in 1876, some overtures of peace were made. These led to a very important Conference in Cape May, New Jersey, in August of 1876. There, in Congress Hall, five delegates each—three clergy and two

laymen—from the northern and the southern churches met to discuss relationships between the two churches and to attempt to resolve differences. The greatest achievement of the Conference was that they met at all after their arrival in Cape May. No formal meetings took place until the northern church put in writing that “each of the Churches is a legitimate branch of Episcopal Methodism.” Thus the basis of fraternity was resolved, and the meetings followed.

Although more than sixty years elapsed between the Cape May Conference and the Kansas City Uniting Conference, as Kenneth E. Rowe wrote in *The Spirit of Cape May*, “The Spirit of Cape May, together with the Holy Spirit, triumphed in the end.” Cape May is now a United Methodist Historic Site, and a monument on the grounds of First United Methodist Church commemorates this historic Conference. One of the lay delegates to the Cape May Conference and secretary of the northern delegation was General Clinton B. Fisk. Though General Fisk then lived in Saint Louis, he would soon move to Sea Bright, New Jersey, where he became the leading layman of the Conference and one of the leading laity in the Methodist Episcopal Church. New Jersey Methodists did contribute to the long road to unity.

Southern New Jersey Methodists seemed to favor unity. In 1924 there was a strong attempt to unite the northern and southern branches of the church. After long negotiations the 1924 General Conference of each church voted approval. It failed to be consummated because, although the southern annual conferences voted approval, they did not muster the necessary three-fourths required. The New Jersey Conference approved the merger by a vote of 129 to 6.

After a pause in negotiation, the Methodist Protestants entered the picture in 1932, and all seemed ready to unite. The 1935 plan was approved by large majorities at each church’s General Conference and by the annual conferences as well. The New Jersey Conference clergy approved 205 to 0. The laymen approved with only one negative vote. Union took place May 10, 1939 in Kansas City, Missouri. The following year the first quadrennial General Conference of The Methodist Church was held in Atlantic City. New Jersey Methodists again were hosts to a gathering of united Methodists. In June of 1940, Atlantic City was host to the first session of the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, a new entity brought into being by the newly united church. New Jersey Methodists played a role in church union.

Union was also manifested in another way within the conference. There were no M.E. Church, South, churches within the New Jersey Conference. Yet there were thirty-nine Methodist Protestant churches, formerly a part of the Eastern Conference, located within their South Jersey and Central Districts. Nineteen of those did not unite in The Methodist Church, some of them forming the Bible Protestant Church. Twenty remained in the new church, and formal unification took place at the 1939 New Jersey Annual Conference held in Ocean City. This unity has been real.

Another form of merger took place within the conference in 1965. The black Delaware Conference, the oldest such conference in Methodism, was dissolved, and its churches were transferred into the conferences in whose bounds they were located. Led by Bishop Prince A. Taylor, Jr., twenty-four churches, twenty-one ministers, and eight pastors’ widows united with our conference at its June session. The result has been a growing union within New Jersey Methodism that has indeed enlarged our horizons and contributed to our unity in Christ.

Now we are known as The United Methodist Church. The word “united” represents the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church into a larger unity. This merger was accomplished Tuesday, April 23, 1968, in Dallas, Texas. The EUBs, as they had been called, had been a union of the former Evangelical and United Brethren Churches. Theirs was a heritage dating back to the late eighteenth century and the evangelical ministry of men such as Martin Boehm, Philip William Otterbein, and Jacob Albright. These men were well known to the Methodist Bishop Asbury. In fact, Otterbein participated in Asbury’s 1784 ordination. Martin Boehm’s son, Henry, was one of Asbury’s traveling companions and Albright began preaching as a Methodist exhorter. But their work was among Germans and they went their separate ways, though in doctrine and polity all three churches were similar. Now God made them all one.

Within the bounds of the Southern New Jersey Conference there were three Evangelical United Brethren Churches. Church of the Good Shepherd in Willingboro, formed in 1959, and Church of the Master in Howell Township, begun in 1962, had both been new congregations. Evangelical Church, formerly Zion, in Clarksboro, was organized as an Evangelical Church in 1880. Today these congregations within our conference contribute to an ever wider unity in Christ. Out of this unity has come a wider appreciation on the part of us all for our larger heritage of faith through such founding leaders as Wesley and Asbury, Otterbein, Boehm, and Albright.

The congregations of the conference share a rich yet divergent heritage. For our congregations include those of many racial, ethnic and language groups. In the larger union of United Methodism, we in Southern New Jersey have played a part, larger in some than others, but always a part. Our hope and prayer is that as we continue to serve Christ we may yet experience greater unions and wider diversities. May we who are United Methodists and we of the Southern New Jersey Conference ever move closer to the goal of being “one in Christ” while seeing with John Wesley that “the world is our parish.”

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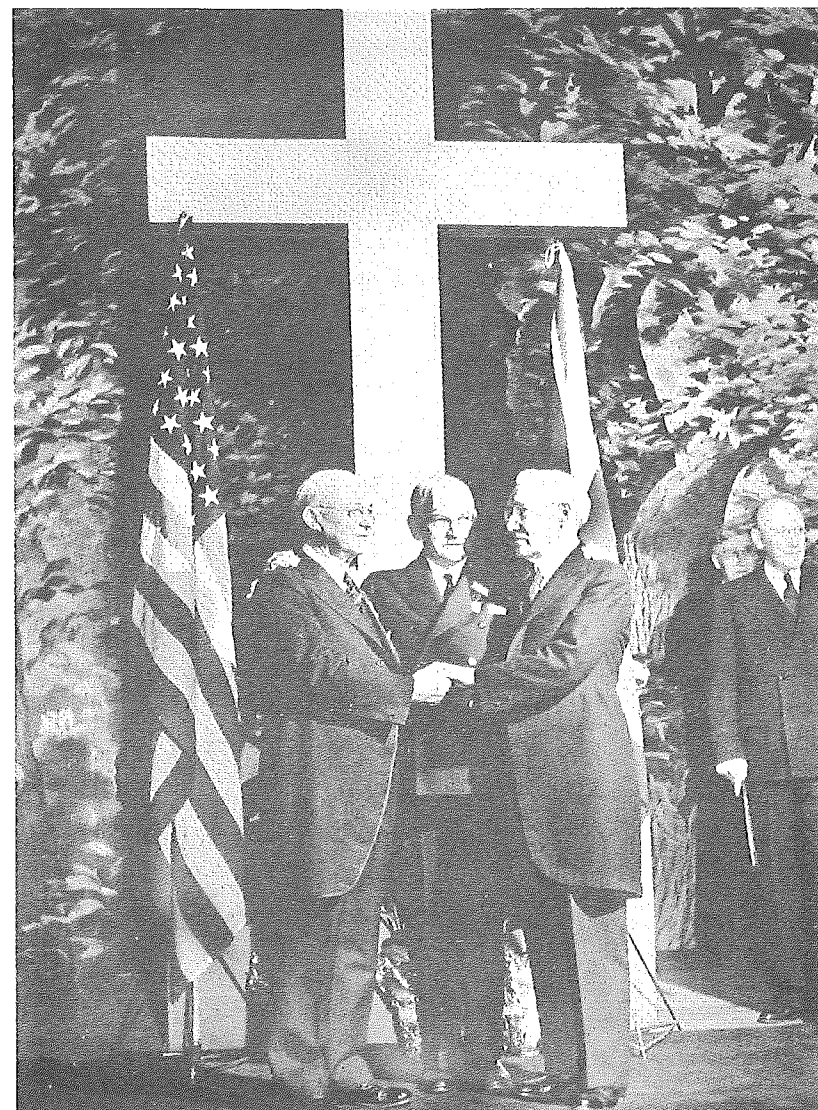
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Bishop James H. Straughn, Methodist Protestant (left),
Bishop Edwin Holt Hughes, Methodist Episcopal (center),
and Bishop John M. Moore, Methodist Episcopal, South (right),
clasp hands at the formation of
The Methodist Church
in Kansas City, Missouri, May 10, 1939.
Photo from An Album of Methodist History.

The United Methodist Church's First Quarter Century in Light of 1968

Reflections by Southern New Jersey's Ministerial Delegate

Rev. Dr. Charles A. Sayre

[The Rev. Dr. Charles A. Sayre is the only living ministerial delegate to the 1968 Uniting Conference from the Southern New Jersey Conference. He has attended every General Conference since 1964, and he has led the Southern New Jersey Conference clergy delegation seven times, from 1968 to 1992. He was dean of the clergy at the 1992 General Conference. He has been a delegate to eight General Conferences, more than any other clergy member in the history of the Southern New Jersey Conference. We are grateful for the depth of his insight and the maturity of his reflections on the 1968 Uniting Conference. The Rev. Dr. Sayre is a Life Member of the Southern New Jersey Conference Historical Society.—Ed.]

It is interesting to those of us who were involved to assess what we created at the General Conference of 1968, and to do so in light of our expectations. As with memories of most momentous events, reflections are positive and negative, weighted in this case on the side of the positive.

The reasons were sound to merge the Methodists with the Evangelical United Brethren. Both denominations, though vastly different in size (ten to one), had a common heritage and few differences in polity or theology. At a time when the divisions in Christendom seemed especially grievous, most of the major denominations were moving toward the union of bodies within their traditions. We saw no reason not to merge, except for what seemed "housekeeping" problems—we had no idea how consuming they would become! The thorniest problems prior to the union were term versus life tenure for bishops and the location of theological schools. Once these larger questions were settled they remained settled, and no serious divisions at all were carried from the merger into the new church—a remarkable tribute to the full consultations and warm fraternal spirit of the deliberations. In fact, I have never, in the years since, heard a single opinion from informed leaders of either tradition that the union was anything but necessary.

Does this mean that our bright hopes for a larger, more effective church have been fulfilled? Sadly it is not so. A ten-million-member body merged with a one-million-member body, and within a decade a million members had vanished! Can the losses be attributed to the merger, or would they have come in any case? This question is hard to assess since the decline struck all mainline denominations. But without question, in many communities where former Methodist and former EUB local churches merged, there was considerable attrition. We also were learning that what plays well on the floor of General Conference may not play well on Main Street back home. The preoccupation of our leadership after the merger with voluminous administrative problems that had been created by the union, along with the perceived immediate need to reorder all of the structures of the church at the General

Conference of 1972, may have caused us "to fiddle while Rome burned." We have paid a heavy price indeed in these twenty-five years for our concentration on our organization at the expense of our larger purposes.

But by the same token, the greatest benefits of the merger can be seen in the large leadership pool it created. Far from being "swallowed up," as some had predicted, the EUB Church has provided an unusual proportion of highly-gifted leaders, both lay and clergy, to The United Methodist Church.

Today the desire for more church union has cooled considerably. Mergers are not ends in themselves; and unless mission is strengthened, efforts are misplaced. This is still "The Ecumenical Age," but we are living it today with realism born of these struggles.



The Rev. Dr. Charles A. Sayre



The Rev. Dr. Albert C. Outler

Visions and Dreams

The Unfinished Business of an Unfinished Church

A Sermon for the Uniting Conference of The United Methodist Church. Delivered by the Rev. Dr. Albert C. Outler, Professor of Historical Theology, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. Dallas Memorial Auditorium, Dallas, Texas. Tuesday, April 23, 1968.

Rev. Dr. Albert C. Outler

"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

Acts 2:17 RSV

Fathers and Brethren and Sisters in Christ:

Here we are this morning, gathered together from over the world and from all sorts and conditions of men—to celebrate a birthday, *our* birthday as The United Methodist Church. In just a few moments now, we shall join in a ceremony symbolizing our new covenant of unity and mutual growth together. The aura of every newborn thing is an aura of hope. And so it is with us today. We stand here on a threshold. A new horizon looms ahead.

In some ears, it may sound fantastic to relate *this* day to the first Pentecost recorded in Acts 2—what with no rushing mighty wind, no tongues of fire, no glossolalia, and so forth. But actually, the lasting meaning of *that* Pentecost was its opening the way for others to follow after.

And while the day of Pentecost was getting on, they [the disciples] were all together with one accord in one place. . . . And they were filled with the Holy Spirit . . . and began to speak . . . as the Spirit gave them the power of utterance . . . about the great deeds of God. [Acts 2:1, 4, 11]

This is, of course, an abridgment of the longer text, with the marvels omitted and also those two bits of local color that still intrigue me: the one where Peter denies that the disciples are drunk because it was too early in the morning (about the same time of day as *now!*); and that other one about the 3,000 new members added in one day. What a frustration it must have been for Peter to have all that happen, with no board to report it to!

The text of the Rev. Dr. Outler's sermon appeared in *Daily Christian Advocate* (Proceedings of the Uniting Conference of The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, 1968), Vol. I, No. 3; Dallas, Texas, Thursday, April 25, 1968; pp. 133–135 (21–23). The sermon was reprinted in *Journal of the 1968 General Conference, The United Methodist Church* (Journal of the Last Session of the General Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, Last Session of the General Conference of The Methodist Church, and the Uniting Conference of The United Methodist Church and the General Conference of The United Methodist Church; Held at Dallas, Texas, April 21–May 4, 1968), Volume II, pp. 995–1003.

Just Start of New Day

Clearly, though, that *first* Pentecost was less significant for what happened *then* than for what came after. Pentecost *was the day when the real work of the church began*, when the Christian people accepted the agenda of their unfinished business in the world and began to get on with it! Those first Christians were not very well furnished in terms of ecclesiastical apparatus. Their organization was shaky, their polity and discipline sketchy. Their theologians were in typical disagreement, and their most prominent "lay leaders" were Ananias and Sapphira!

Even so, *that* Pentecost was ever thereafter memorable as the Church's *birthday*, as the day when Joel's prophecy was fulfilled—when the Holy Spirit would come and abide as God's governing presence in the midst of his People—and this memory remained, even when the rushing mighty wind subsided to homiletical zephyrs, when glossolalia was relegated to the margins of Christian experience, when the tongues of fire gave way to controversy and conflict. Pentecost is rightly remembered as the day when the Christian church was launched on its career *in history, for the world*. In every age, her performance has been scandalously short of her visions and dreams—and her plain imperatives. And yet also in every age since that first Pentecost, it is the Christian church that has marked off the crucial difference between man's best hope and his genuine despair.

Real Work Ahead

I know as well as anyone that this analogy between that first birthday and this one of ours does not apply foursquare. Our new church does not represent a radical break with our several past histories nor is there a comparable intention toward a radically new future. Even so, the analogy between that first Pentecost and this one could be edifying to us, too. This is the day when *the real work of the UMC begins*. It is a day when doors are opened that heretofore were closed, when new possibilities of reformation and renewal are literally "at hand."

The essence of the event is self-evident: it is the accomplished fact of The United Methodist Church. Where once, scarcely a generation ago, there were five churches, now there is one. Where once our differences kept us apart—with different languages and folkways—now they are overcome or at least contained within a larger circle of committed fellowship. We have been Christian brethren, after a fashion, for the better part of two centuries—but *separated* brethren. Now our memberships and ministries have been mingled without compromise or indignity; our separate traditions have been sublated and made one.

Obviously, no part of our venture in unity is really *finished* as yet. Our joy in *this* union ought to be tempered by our remembrance, in love, of those others of our Christian brethren, whom we acknowledge as such, and yet from whom we are still separated. Moreover, the various practical, domestic

problems posed by our agenda in this Conference loom large and exigent. It will *not* be a debonair fortnight; few of us are likely to be content with the outcome. And yet, here we are and this is our birthday. Here we turn a new page in modern church history—and, just as smugness is excluded from our celebration, so also is cynicism.

Let us then ask ourselves what this fact of a new church makes possible. What will it take to turn this beginning into the reality of its promise and of our hopes? We can offer our ungrudging gratitude and honor to all those whose toil and tears, faith and fortitude have led us to this hour—so long as we are all clear that none of their laurels (and certainly none of ours) is for *resting on*. We have much to be grateful for, nothing to be complacent about. Our joy this day is foretaste: foretaste of a future that can be even more creative than we have yet dared to ask or think.

This means that, as we turn from our ceremony of beginnings to the tasks that follow, our foremost need is for a vivid sense of the church we have been called to be. By what norms shall we seek to transform our covenant into genuine *koinonia*? By what principles are we willing to be guided in the agonies of growth that lie ahead? To what heavenly vision are we prepared to be obedient in the difficult days and years that even the blithest optimist can foresee?

Old Order Is Gone

One thing is for sure: what has served till now as our *status quo ante* will simply not suffice for the upcoming future. For all its great merits—for all its saints and heroes—the standing order is now too nearly preoccupied with self-maintenance and survival. The world is in furious and agonizing turmoil, incomprehensible and unmanageable. The church is in radical crisis, and in the throes of a profound demoralization, at every level: of faith and order, life and work. In such times, business as usual simply will not get our business done. Our own past golden age (the 19th century)—the heyday of pietism in a pre-urbanized society—has faded. Frontiersmen for tomorrow must be as dynamically adaptive to the *new* "new world" as our forefathers were in theirs.

There is, of course, a bit of glibness here—for the brute fact is that we have no clearly visible alternative to the *status quo* ready to hand, available merely for our choice and application. For all their advertisements, none of the new experiments of celebration of our own brave new world can honestly be hailed as the shape of things to come. Nor is it the case that any of our sister churches have had vouchsafed to them the blueprints for Zion's Ark, space-age model—though some (notably the Roman Catholics) have recently exposed themselves to more massive and more fruitful self-examination than we.

For freedom we have been set free, from the outdated past—but it begins to look as if we have been condemned *to* freedom as well: condemned to come

up with something better than protests and complaints and self-righteous criticism of others; we are condemned to *responsible* prophecy, reform and renewal—or else to the fatal consequences of destructive discontent. If, in this new church of ours, we are to avoid “the dinosaur-syndrome” (with its zeal for furnishing later ages an abundance of fossils) or its opposite, “the Elijah complex” (with its self-pitying self-righteousness about our minority status), we *must* find our way forward in conscious concern for the continuum of the Christian tradition and history in which we stand with our forefathers: always aware of God’s habit of linking the past and the future by means of the hopeful acts of men in decisive *present* moments—like *this one!* We *must* learn to discipline our imaginations and inventions, not by our own constrictive biases but by God’s open-hearted mandates for his people, by patterns that will serve our *common* life in the Body of Christ.

Catholic, Evangelical, Reformed

One version of the style of the new church that is to be has already been encapsulated in a phrase now familiar from the discussions of the Consultation on Church Union. It is a sort of motto that could qualify as a charter for authentic unity and effective mission: “We seek to be a church truly *catholic*, truly *evangelical*, truly *reformed*.” These words themselves are obviously not new; COCU has no copyright on this motto. Its significance lies in its summation of three essential dimensions and concerns of *any* company of persons calling and professing themselves Christian. Each of the terms has had a varied history of interpretation and misinterpretation; each has been a fighting word at one time or another. It is only when all three are taken and held *together*—each balancing and explaining the other two—that we can recognize their relevance as goal-points for the church we aspire to be: catholic *and* evangelical (*both*, not either/or); catholic, evangelical *and* reformed—viz., with both catholic and evangelical concerns brought under perennial reassessment and re-formation in each successive new age.

One of the virtues of the motto is that it suggests a rich range of meanings, without specifying any single one of them as obligatory upon all. Certainly the interpretation I now propose makes no claim to finality. My only concern is to interest you in trying to understand its possible import for us in the UMC and in our efforts to shape her future during these next two weeks and the next two decades.

The basic meaning of the word “catholic” is “whole,” “universal,” “open.” It reminds us that true unity not only allows for diversity, it *requires* it. “Catholic” has never rightly meant “uniform,” “lock-step,” “produced by template.” It means “*inclusive*”—a community in which all the members “*belong*” equally and by right of membership, in which all ministers share equally the basic office of representing the whole church, by right of ordination. It means “open”—a community whose boundaries are set by the Christian *essentials* (the *bare* essentials at that) in which it is bad faith for anyone

to deny full membership to any other save by the canons of faith in Christ and the Christian discipline that derives from that confession. This rules out all distinctions based on race, sex, class and culture—and so also all distinctions based on partisan emphases on this doctrine or that, this form of worship or that, this pattern of polity or that. Here is the plain teaching of Wesley’s sermon on *Catholic Spirit*—a sermon we would do well to recall and to update in terms that might fit our own condition. A church tormented and befuddled by racial strife is not yet truly “catholic.” A church that cannot manage her global ties without “colonialism” or “autonomy” is not yet “truly catholic.” A church that proudly (or humbly!) sets her own polity and folkways above those of other churches may be “united” but she is not yet “truly catholic.” A church that opens her Sacraments to all other Christians but is herself not yet eligible for sharing in the sacraments of some of the others is not yet “truly catholic.” And if the main fault here lies, as we may think it does, with others fencing *us* from *their* Sacraments, this does not alter the fact that we have rarely asked, with appropriate dignity, what is required of us, and them, for the valid mingling of our memberships, ministries and sacraments. It is also true that the other churches are not fully catholic, either—and this is the ecumenical tragedy!—but if we are to join them in the search for a more inclusive, integral “*catholic*” fellowship in Christ, the least we can do is to commit ourselves to just such a fellowship in this new church of ours—and to open our hearts and minds to yet further bold ventures in quest of Christian unity.

Truly Evangelical

But catholicity by itself is not enough. The church is called to mission, and her mission is both her message *and* the demonstration of that message in her corporate life. Her message is not *herself*, either—it is her witness to the *Christian Evangel*: to the scandal and folly of Christ incarnate, Christ crucified, Christ resurrected, Christ transforming human life and culture, Christ in the world, Christ for the world; Christ in us, our hope of glory! Thus, the church we are called to be must be “truly evangelical”—a church ablaze with a passion that God’s Gospel shall be preached and heard and responded to in faith and hope and love by all who can be reached and instructed and gathered into the fellowship of God’s covenanted People. The *fullness* of the Gospel embraces all human concerns everywhere and always; but the *heart* of the Gospel is startlingly simple: that God loves you and me and all men with a very special love and that Jesus Christ is the sufficient proof of this love to every man who will receive and confess him as Saviour and Lord.

The Gospel is the good news that it is God’s love that pardons, heals and reconciles, God’s love that demands that we be fully human and opens up this possibility, for us, God’s love that can sanctify our memories and our hopes. And yet, this same Gospel also reminds us, in *every* human circum-

stance, that our salvation comes from God's sheer unmerited favor. In no sense can it ever be earned or bought or wheedled—it does not come by any merit or demerit, by any good works or bad, by any claim that we can bring on our own behalf. The word “evangelical” is concerned above all with *the faith that receives the Gospel wholeheartedly and in trust*; it stresses faith as a gift from God, faith as man's basic response to God, faith as the mortal foe of all human *pride*—and yet also faith as the loyal ally of all true human *dignity*.

The church evangelical is, therefore, radically Christ-centered—disengaged from any final dependence on ecclesiastical apparatus of whatever sort, save only as it ministers to her central mission: that men may receive God's gift of saving grace in Christ and learn to live in the world in true communion with the Holy Spirit and with one another. The church evangelical is a proclaiming church—but it is also a *teaching church*. Wesley often pointed out that the difference between *his* movement and the others—equally zealous in proclamation—was his provision of *societies* in which converts came to learn the meaning of the Gospel *in depth* and in *concrete life-situations*.

We Methodists and EUBs alike—by profession and fond memory—are grateful heirs of evangelical fathers and brethren, but we can scarcely boast of having fully claimed their legacy. A church falling behind in the race with an exploding and huddling population is not “truly evangelical,” despite its self-advertisements. A church that counts her evangelical harvest chiefly in terms of members added to the rolls is not *truly* evangelical. A church the vast majority of whose members do not really understand the great issues entailed by “the Protestant principle”—God's sovereignty, man's justification by faith alone, the witness of the Spirit, the life of grace, the authority of the Scripture as the prime source of divine revelation, and so forth—such a church is not only not truly evangelical, she is, indeed, partaker in the greatest tragedy of modern Christianity: the abject failure of *the teaching church*.

Much to Learn

Here we are—Christians by name and sign—organized to the teeth and involved in titanic labors of all sorts, and yet the generality of our people do not really know what the Christian faith purports, do not really believe in their hearts and minds what they profess with their lips, and, of those who do, there are few who can give a rational accounting of it to themselves and others. The proof of this turns up in every great upheaval—doctrinal, moral, social. The church evangelical must not be doctrinaire—but surely her people should be clear about the crucial priorities between God and man in the mystery of salvation and in the enterprise of our becoming fully human. Wesley and Asbury and Otterbein and Albright understood these priorities in their day and in their terms. Those days and those terms are not ours—but the same task remains: of calling all men to the love of God above all else and of all else in God.

And yet, even the best conceptions of “catholicity” and “evangelical zeal” sag out of shape as history moves the church along through time and change. The provisional becomes permanent, creative experiments from an early age become vested interests in a later one, the pragmatic *warrant* for a given polity becomes defensive and self-maintaining. What once was a sign of “catholic spirit” becomes a new sectarianism; what once was an authentic evangelical concern becomes calcified into *theories about evangelism* that do not get the whole Gospel preached and heard and appropriated for life in the secular city. And so the church, even as she seeks to be truly catholic *and* truly evangelical, must also be truly *reformed*—constantly open to God's judgment upon the insidious idolatries of every successful venture, aware of the waning of every heyday—a church eager to be re-formed, re-newed: to have her spirit and power repristinated.

A church truly reformed is one that is open, intentionally and on principle, to creative change of every sort (in teaching, discipline and administration)—not haphazard or reckless change but not timid and grudging, either. The church reformed lives by the Scriptures for they alone provide a decisive appeal to the constitutive tradition of Christ without the dead-hand of traditionalism; the Scriptures alone provide for radical, mandated change without the gusts and shallows of human ingenuity. Their authority does not rest upon their letter nor yet with any arcane or coterie interpretation—but rather upon the public sense of the texts and their original intentions, enriched by the wisdom of the teaching church through all the ages, sifted by the canons of critical reason and vital Christian experience in the modern world.

But the church reformed is also under the judgment of the future. The eschatological orientation of faith is forever demanding that the old be constantly re-examined and re-constituted—always with an eye to the urgent, the needful, the effective. The reforming spirit calls for self-examination without self-justification, self-criticism without self-loathing, creative discontent rooted in the conviction that the *good* is the enemy of the *best*.

It may seem to some a mite unseasonable to suggest that the UMC needs to take conscious, urgent thought of being or becoming “truly reformed,” *just now!* We *are* a church re-formed: what with our new plan and our newer report and with ten more days to pull and haul away at their discussion, amendment, and adoption. Surely *this* is enough for the present moment. Well, ye-s-s—in a way—but that's partly my point. This plan and the report in the form in which they will stand when we adjourn will doubtless be the very best we can do, under *all* the circumstances, etc., etc. But for how long will *that* be good enough? The answer: not much beyond the results being printed in the new *Discipline*. Wherefore, *now* is the time, as at that first Pentecost, for young men to see visions and for old men to dream dreams—visions and dreams that ask more of the Methodist people than we have ever asked before, visions and dreams that offer a richer, fuller life for all God's People, visions and dreams that see this “new” church *re-newed* yet again and again, not only “in the Spirit” but in her structures, functions, folkways.

This is not a proposal, not even indirectly, for any specific reform—yours or mine or anybody else's. It is, however, an open advocacy of the *idea* of reform and of "the Protestant principle" of *semper reformanda*. When more of us get accustomed to the notion that this new church of ours *can* be remade for yet more effective mission, for still more authentic democracy and local initiative, for still more efficient, adventurous leadership—and that all this *can* be done and *should* be done forthwith!—then the pooled wisdom of our fellowship will surely be enabled to prove that rational, responsible change is a far more faithful pattern of obedience to Christ than the most devoted immobilism can ever be.

This, then, is our birthday—a day to celebrate, a day to remember, a day for high hopes and renewed commitments. This is a day when the eyes of the whole Christian community are focused on us and especially those of our Methodist brethren in Britain who are with us here in spirit. This *is* the day that the Lord has made. Let us *really* rejoice and be glad in it—glad for the new chance God now gives us: to be a church united in order to be uniting, a church repentant in order to be a church redemptive, a church cruciform in order to manifest God's triumphant agony for mankind,

Till sons of men shall learn *his* love
And follow where *his* feet have trod;
Till, glorious from the heavens above,
Shall come the city of our God!

Frank Mason North (1850–1935), 1903, *altered*

Let us pray: O God of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favorably on thy whole church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; and, by the tranquil operation of thy perpetual providence, carry out the work of man's salvation; and let the whole world feel and see that things which were cast down are being raised up, that those things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are returning to perfection, through him from whom they took their origin, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Susanna Wesley

or

The Human Side of the Mother of Methodism

Rev. Dr. Frederick E. Maser

John Wesley said something about his mother that instantly endears her to everyone. In his sermon, "On the Education of Children," he wrote, "In fourscore years I have never met with one woman who knew how to manage grandchildren. My own mother, who governed her children so well, could never govern one grandchild."

Methodism has always stood in awe of Susanna Wesley—a firm, methodical woman who ably coped with her husband's testy temper, but never lost his affection or his love; who bore nineteen children, rearing ten of them to maturity, educating them herself, and preparing her three sons for college; who wrote a scholarly commentary on the Apostles' Creed, but by good management lived within her husband's annual income of 160 pounds; who handled with shrewd insight the practical affairs of the Epworth Parish, and yet discussed the writings of à Kempis with John, one of her Oxford-trained sons.

Little wonder it is that the average Methodist mother feels inadequate in the presence of Susanna. She seems made of superior metal.

It is heartwarming, therefore, to learn that she had *some very human traits*, the one most easily understood being her indulgent affection for her grandchildren.

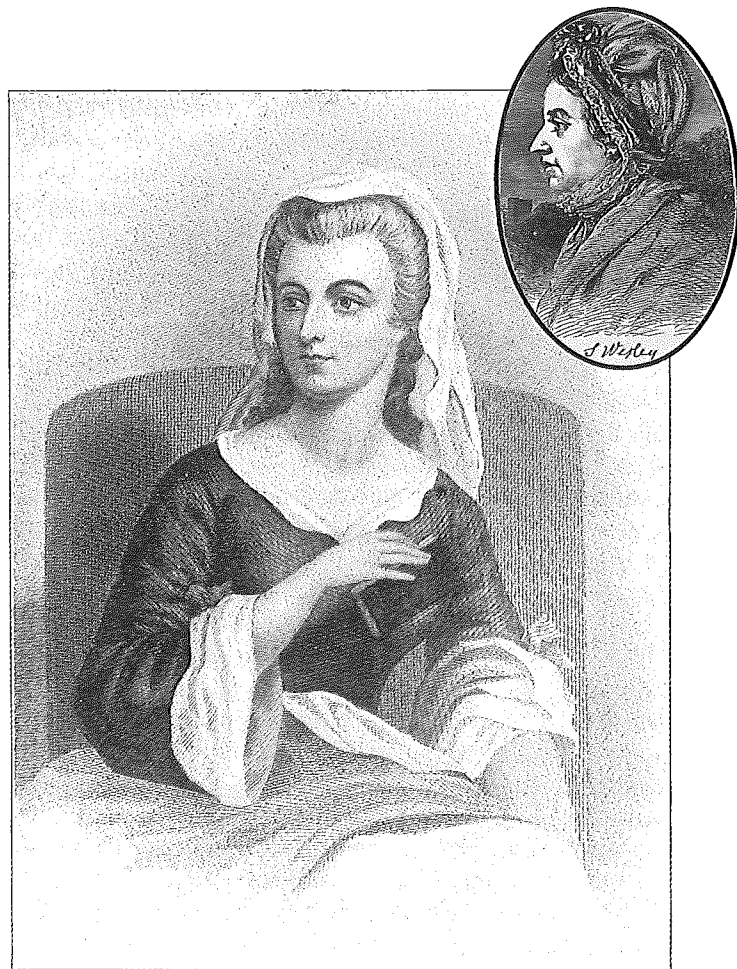
At times, too, she permitted herself *the luxury of complaining*—and she had far more to complain about than she ever mentioned. In writing to her son, John, she said, "It is an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family that your father and I seldom think alike."

On another occasion she told her brother her answer to the Archbishop of York who, when her husband was in prison for debt, asked her if she had ever actually wanted for bread: "My Lord, I will freely own to Your Grace that, strictly speaking, I never did want bread, but then I had so much care to get it before it was eaten, and to pay for it after, as has often made it very unpleasant to me. And I think to have bread on such terms is the next degree of wretchedness to having none at all."

* * *

Often overlooked is the fact that Susanna was A VERY BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. She came from a family of beautiful women. Her sister, Elizabeth,

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Susanna Wesley

The large portrait of the young Susanna Wesley circulated widely in the nineteenth century and may be largely responsible for the belief that Mrs. Wesley was extremely beautiful. The person shown in this picture is not Susanna Wesley, however; it is the sister of Mrs. Charles Wesley, a person whom Susanna Wesley never even met.

The inset (upper right) shows a more faithful likeness of Mrs. Susanna Wesley.

who married the eccentric London bookseller, John Dunton, is described by him as "tall; of good aspect; her hair of light chestnut color; dark eyes; her eyebrows dark and even; her mouth little and sufficiently sweet—her neck long and graceful; white hands; a well shaped body; her complexion very fair."

Another sister, Judith, was painted by Sir Peter Lely and included in his gallery of beauties.

But Adam Clarke in writing of Susanna quotes an accepted authority who knew all the sisters well and said, "Beautiful as Miss [Judith] Annesley appears, she was far from being as beautiful as Mrs. Wesley."

Susanna Wesley's beauty, however, never overshadowed her *disciplined mind* or her *pious spirit*. When she was still in her early teens she sufficiently understood the disagreements between the Dissenters and the Established Church to make up her own mind to side with the Anglicans in spite of the fact that her father, Samuel Annesley, was a famous non-conformist preacher.

She made it a rule while still quite young never to spend more time in any matter of mere recreation in one day than she spent in private religious duties; and one of her biographers says, "Hers was a religion of enlightened principle, rather than transient emotion."

Her disagreements with her husband, and there were many, never destroyed the sincere affection which bound them together. The one time Samuel Wesley was in a debtors' prison Susanna sent her wedding ring and other jewelry for his relief. It was a magnanimous gift which he as magnanimously returned, though he was touched by her consideration and moved by her generosity. He bore her too great an affection to permit her making this sacrifice for his comfort.

In 1711, while her husband attended Convocation in London, Susanna began reading sermons to her family by way of religious instruction. Servants and friends asked permission to attend, until eventually about two hundred persons crowded the parsonage.

The Curate, named Inman, jealous because Mrs. Wesley had a larger congregation than he, wrote Mr. Wesley a letter of complaint, calling the meetings "a conventicle," illegal in that day. Mr. Wesley wrote his wife to get someone else to read, but when she replied no man in the community could read well enough, the rector bluntly said he desired the meetings stopped.

Susanna's answer is classic. She first tells him of the amount of good the meetings are doing and then adds: "If after all this you think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me you *desire* me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience; but send your *positive command* in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting this opportunity for doing good when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Needless to say, the *positive command* was never sent.

John Wesley, himself, relates another serious disagreement between his parents. "The year before King William died, my father observed my mother did not say *Amen* to the prayer for the King. She said she could not; for she did not believe the Prince of Orange was King. He vowed he would never cohabit with her till she did. He then took his horse and rode away; nor did she hear anything of him for a twelvemonth. He then came back and lived with her as before."

By this time fortunately a new sovereign was on the throne of England to whom both the Wesleys could conscientiously give their allegiance. Biographers have softened the Rector's harsh conduct by explaining that he was probably attending Convocation meetings in London, and that he was not gone a whole twelve months. At any rate the immediate fruit of the reunion of the Wesleys was the birth of John himself.

Susanna's spiritual experience was a steady growth. It was greatly deepened, moreover, when she read a book written by two Danish missionaries of their work at Tranquebar, a mission station established by the King of Denmark. A full account of this event is related in a letter to her husband, to which she adds: "I thought I might live in a more exemplary manner, I might pray more for the people, and speak with more warmth to those with whom I have opportunity of conversing. However, I resolved to begin with my own children."

From then on she followed the custom of giving to each of her children a definite time during the week to talk to that child about his or her problems, and future.

Years later John Wesley in writing to his mother recalls this custom, asking her now to pray for him especially on Thursday evenings, which time she formerly set aside as his night for those conversations that helped him in forming his judgments.

The high respect in which she held the Danish missionaries and their work, moreover, may well account for her answer to John when he requested permission to go to Georgia as a missionary to the Indians. She was a widow at the time and John would not go without her blessing. "I can be the staff of her age," he said, "her chief support and comfort, and I will leave it with her to decide, and that shall settle the question." Her answer reflected her courage and her indomitable faith: "If I had twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed though I never should see them again."

Her methods of education are too well known to need repeating, and her patience is far better remembered by most Methodists than anything else about her. When her husband in exasperation said to her: "Why do you sit there teaching that dull child that lesson over the twentieth time?" she calmly replied, "Had I satisfied myself by mentioning the matter only nineteen times, I should have lost all my labour. You see, it was the twentieth time that crowned the whole."

Even John Wesley himself who was well known for his self-possession, admired "the calm serenity with which his mother transacted business, wrote letters, and conversed, surrounded by her thirteen children."

Her innumerable troubles, at times unbearable, are admitted by all her biographers. The famous rectory fire from which John Wesley was miraculously saved, "as a brand plucked out of the burning," left the Wesleys severely impoverished.

In 1731, when Matthew Wesley, brother of the rector, visited them, he found the daughters poorly clad and the house scarcely half furnished.

Susanna was frequently sick, unable to leave her room, and during one winter, when she was daily expected to die, the management of the household fell upon Emilia, her eldest daughter. "Then I learned," writes Emilia, "what it was to seek money for bread, seldom having any without such hardships in getting it that much abated the pleasure of it."

On another occasion there was an exciting and bitter election in which the rector took an active part. So infuriated were his opponents that they tried to kill him. Failing this, they tried desperately to annoy and harm his family. All one night they "kept drumming, shouting, and firing off pistols and guns" under the windows of the rectory where Mrs. Wesley lay sick and tired from the birth of a child.

Temporarily, the child was placed in the care of a nurse across from the parsonage. But the nurse, kept awake by the frightful noise, and finally sleeping from sheer exhaustion, unknowingly "overlaid the child" and smothered it.

The nurse, frantic with fright when she saw what she had done, ran across the street and fairly threw the baby at one of the servants, who placed its lifeless form, without warning, in Mrs. Wesley's arms.

Order and sincere religion marked the Wesley household. Everything was done methodically and each child was assigned definite chores and duties. They received nothing they cried for, and they were required to ask for what they wanted from even the lowest servant in terms of utmost respect and politeness. They were taught the Lord's Prayer as soon as they could speak, and as they grew older "a short prayer for their parents, and some collects, a short catechism, and some portion of scripture, as their memory could bear." Six hours daily were given to their schooling.

For this task Susanna was well fitted. She was the twenty-fifth daughter of the learned Samuel Annesley, a famous nonconformist pastor and a brilliant preacher. Of her mother little is recorded except that she came from a distinguished line of scholars, her father being John White, an outstanding London lawyer.

All the children of Dr. Annesley were supposedly well educated and G. J. Stevenson, in his *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, says: "Of Susanna it is on record that she was acquainted with Greek and Latin and had a respectable

knowledge of the French language. Of this there is reason for doubt; but for all that is implied by a complete and thorough English education we may undoubtedly give her full credit."

Her influence upon Methodism was far-reaching. She instilled in John a love for method and order, a deep appreciation of learning and books, studious and economical habits, and a sincere reverence for God.

At first she was critical of the evangelical experience of her sons, as was her eldest son, Samuel. But, once she understood its true meaning, she heartily supported their preaching it and eventually in the communion service experienced it herself. She wrote: "Two or three weeks ago, while my Son Hall was pronouncing the words the 'blood of the Lord Jesus Christ,' they struck through my heart, and I knew God for Christ's sake had forgiven all my sins."

John Wesley listened to her advice long after he reached full maturity, and it was she who urged him to permit Thomas Maxfield, though a layman, to preach. To his sarcastic statement, "I find Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher," she replied: "John, you know what my sentiments have been; you cannot suspect me favoring readily anything of this kind; but take care what you do with respect to that young man; he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him yourself."

Wesley followed his mother's advice, heard Maxfield and then said, "It is the Lord; let him do as seemeth to him good." Lay preaching in Methodism had received a tremendous impetus.

Susanna died at seventy-three years of age and her last request was, "Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God." John preached her funeral sermon and, in writing of the occasion later, he said: "It was one of the most solemn assemblies I ever saw, or expect to see, on this side eternity."

Adam Clarke summarized her life by saying: "I have been acquainted with many pious females; I have read the lives of others; but such a woman, take her for all in all, I have not heard of, I have not read of, nor with her equal have I been acquainted. Such an one Solomon has described at the end of his Proverbs; and adapting his words I can say, 'Many daughters have done virtuously, but Susanna Wesley has excelled them all.'"



To Serve the Present Age Aldersgate Sermon

*A Sermon for the 254th Anniversary of
the Heart-Warming Experience of John Wesley
and in anticipation of the nomination of Pemberton United Methodist Church
as a United Methodist Historic Site.
Delivered at Pemberton United Methodist Church, Pemberton, New Jersey.
Aldersgate Day, Sunday, May 24, 1992.*

Rev. Dr. John R. Bowering

"But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." Acts 9:6 RSV

It is a great pleasure and a high privilege to accept the invitation of the Commission on Archives and History and the Conference Historical Society to give the historical address for "New Mills" (Pemberton) United Methodist Church as we await the annual conference confirmation in making this great historical place a United Methodist Historical Site. John Wesley was a great preacher, and a long preacher, and so were his followers, Bishop Asbury, Bishop Coke, George Whitefield, and Captain Thomas Webb. We hear God's word ring out: "But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do" (Acts 9:6).

So God needed Abraham and Moses, Peter and Paul, John and Charles Wesley, Bishop Asbury and Captain Thomas Webb, and so God needs you—all of you gathered here today, as we celebrate the historic Aldersgate transformation of John Wesley's heart-warming experience and the anticipated nomination of the "New Mills" (Pemberton) United Methodist Church, the "manger of Methodism in New Jersey," as an official United Methodist Historical Site. The Methodist society at Pemberton was organized in 1769, historically endeared by the preaching of Captain Thomas Webb, a zealous British Methodist lay preacher and a resident of Pemberton. There is historical documentation that Francis Asbury visited "New Mills" (Pemberton) seventeen times between 1772 and 1813. This church has been blessed with some conscientiously devout clergy and humbly dedicated laity. During my pastorate I heard of the sensitive leadership of clergy such as the Rev. Raymond L. Cooper (1932-1933), the Rev. David Roe Haney (1918-1921), the Rev. Dr. Harry David Hummer (1941-1945), the Rev. Lynn Hough Corson (1934-1936), the Rev. Paul M. Corson (1945-1950), the Rev. Carlton N. Nelson (1963-1966), the Rev. W. Neal Raver (1936-1941), the Rev. Walter A. Quigg (1955-1956), and the Rev. Raymond F. Gruezeke (1956-1961). I remember the spiritual commitment of laity such as Mary and Charles Yerkes; Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Schmelia; Russ Schmelia; Marjorie Eldredge, who married the Rev. G. Stanley McCleave; Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Conover; Ralph Yerkes; Ralph Borrell; William Heisler; Elmer and Gladys Hanes; Morris and Ralph Forte; B. Nay Ridgeway; Fred Dunfee; Emily Parker; Emily Green; and my dear friend, the late Emma

Wrixford. These faithful people by their commitment—depth of concern and love for the church—had a God to glorify as they served their present age. In the same way, God visited the venerable patriarchs of the early church; so God touched these clergy and laity alike, giving them specific tasks to perform in the interest of the Kingdom. Likewise, he has a special task for you, for he made *you a special people*.

From the very beginning of the religious story of Methodism, God worked through specific individuals to accomplish his good purpose. Our text tells us, "Rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." We go, and God tells us what to do. This pattern is seen in Wesley, Whitefield, and Webb.

Let us look at the Book of Acts:

- Chapter 1 The promise of the Holy Spirit; the ascension of Jesus
- Chapter 2 Peter's great sermon; Pentecost; the birth of the church
- Chapter 3 Peter healing the beggar by the power of the Holy Spirit
- Chapter 4 Believers share their possessions, with no strings attached
- Chapter 5 Apostles are persecuted
- Chapter 6 Stephen chosen to serve; Stephen arrested
- Chapter 7 The stoning of Stephen
- Chapter 8 Saul persecutes the church
- Chapter 9 The conversion of Saul—a phenomenal transformation

In the Book of Acts we read of the phenomenal events in the life of human history's ultimate phenomenon.

John Wesley was born June 17, 1703. The son of an Anglican priest, Samuel (Sr.), John was the fifteenth child of nineteen that were born to Samuel and Susanna. Brother Charles, the famous hymn-writer, was born in 1707.

The rectory of the Wesleys burned down on February 9, 1709, when John was five years old. John was trapped in the house, but he was saved when he jumped from the fire into the arms of a man, as "a brand plucked from the burning" (Zechariah 3:2). At that moment, Samuel Wesley knelt and with neighbors and family gave thanks for John's safety. He said, "Let the house burn; I am rich enough"—not in money, for they were poor, but rich in faith and friends.

John was ordained a deacon in 1725 and a priest in 1728. Influenced by the Moravians, in February 1736 he went to Savannah, Georgia, to convert the Indians. He began his Georgia ministry in March 1736; he labored faithfully and diligently. It is recorded that to encourage the poor he went barefoot to teach. He said, on returning from Georgia, "Who will convert me?" He returned to England in 1738. Upset with himself, Wesley was about ready to stop preaching; but a friend, Peter Böhler, told him, "Preach faith till you have it: and then, because you have it, you will preach faith." Wesley cried out, "Lord, help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

Wednesday, May 24, 1738, Wesley opened the Greek New Testament and read II Peter 1:4: "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious

promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature." On the afternoon of the 24th, he was asked to go to Saint Paul's. The musical anthem was "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice" (Psalm 130).

"In the evening," Wesley says, "I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

After that transforming experience, John Wesley began to preach the power of a new life—the gospel of Jesus Christ.

John Wesley loved preaching; it was an instrument of power, and because he loved people, this 5-foot 6-inch, 122-pound preacher loved to declare to them the law and love of God. "A God to glorify;" "To serve the present age."

He preached to more people than any man of his century—not by TV, or radio, but in person: on horseback, in fields, in houses, in cabins, in the streets, and in churches. His preaching was so intense that some people fell into trances, with shrieks of terror, sobs, and cries—the phenomenon of the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

The triumphant joy and blessed fellowship of the Wesley era has not been surpassed since the apostolic times.

The success and growth of the Methodist movement depended upon the character, labor, and sacrifices of the clergy and lay itinerants.

Wesley was an excellent scholar, interested in science, electricity, and medical and scientific advancement; and he loved beautiful scenery. But he was not a systematic theologian or a philosopher. No man since the Reformation, however, has so profoundly affected evangelical theology as John Wesley.

He was tolerant, humane, and ethical; he was an inductive thinker, making sure of facts and truths, a great organizer and administrator, who ruled with firmness but always with kindness. Wesley viewed religion solely from an individualistic standpoint. Wesley was the embodiment of the spirit of the Evangelical Revival. Wesley was not the founder of a church but rather the leader of a religious society. Wesley's work is a marvel in the history of the Christian church. He believed in education and the power of the printing press. He said, "Let's set forth plain truth for plain people." He believed that his sermons accomplished their aims—his power was that of a live preacher facing a great congregation. He was also the author of pithy sayings: "We think and let think"; "The world is my parish." He termed liquor sellers "poison generals of His Majesty's subjects." On his deathbed he said: "The best of all is, God is with us."

His distinctive teachings were

1. Free salvation—Christ died for us all.
2. It is possible by disobedience to fall from this and every other state of grace.
3. The doctrine of assurance: That everyone may know that his sins are forgiven who repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit bearing witness with his spirit.
4. Christian Perfection: That it is possible for a believer to live without willfully transgressing a known law of God.

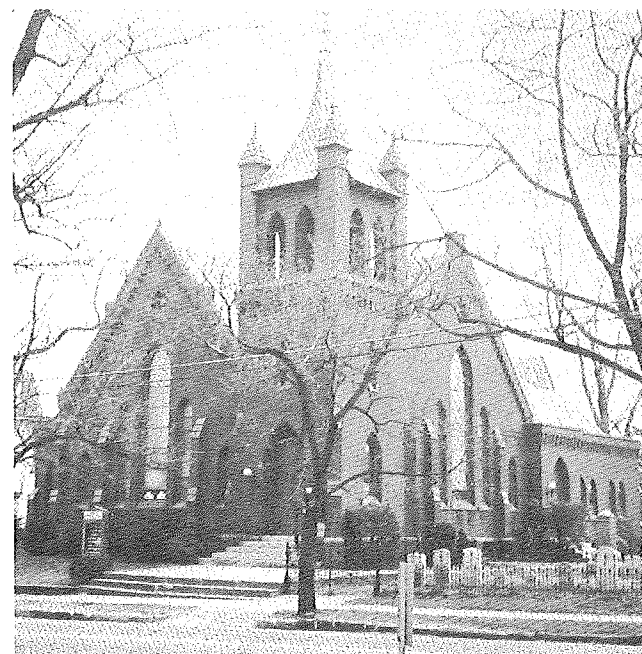
This brings us back to our heritage at "New Mills" (Pemberton) United Methodist Church. Wesley laid hands on Thomas Coke, and Coke ordained Francis Asbury; but during the Revolutionary War Wesley was branded a Tory. Asbury would not take an oath that would be an effrontery to the King. Asbury was arrested; he paid a five-pound fine, and he went to Delaware for two years until the war was over. Asbury was forceful and stubborn in many ways; consequently he argued, and it cost him. God needed Abraham, Moses, Peter, Paul, the Wesleys, Asbury, and Captain Thomas Webb to preach the good news. He needed people called by Christ to assist in the acquisition of property and the building of a church, as William Budd, Jr., did in 1774. Prior to that, in 1768, worship services were held in a log cabin.

Men and women need a God to glorify, and so the ancestors of "New Mills" (Pemberton) rallied together to support clergy and their families, building churches, education buildings, and parsonages. Bishop Asbury preached in the new church on May 5, 1776. The church grew, and in 1833 a new sanctuary was erected; the people ventured further and added a belfry and a spire in 1867. In 1894 fire destroyed the greater part of the town and the church, but the committed Christians did without; with personal sacrifices they accepted the task to build again. To paraphrase our text: "The people entered the burned out city and God told them what to do." With prayerful meditation and honest objectivity, the people reviewed the talents God had given them, and in faith they built this magnificent structure, which is enhanced by the ceiling copied from the great English architect, Christopher Wren. They endowed the building with a legacy of strength. They rebuilt the church building, added a pipe organ in 1912, and built the education building in 1964.

The God who was glorified by your ancestors needs you to serve the present age!

From the very beginning of the religious story of mankind, God worked through specific individuals to accomplish good purposes. He challenged Abraham to go out to a land he would show him and to establish a nation. He spoke to Moses, challenging him to lead a disorganized mob out of bondage into freedom. He spoke to Peter to become a fisher of men. He challenged Saul of Tarsus to become Christ's messenger of salvation. He challenged John Wesley to revitalize religion in England, "a nation of ungodliness."

Captain Thomas Webb, a rich British soldier, was the "spiritual son of John Wesley and a soldier of the cross." He was a zealous and earnest



Pemberton United Methodist Church

Top: The meeting-house in which Francis Asbury preached in 1776.

Bottom: Present church building.

preacher, with a fiery manner—always wearing his colorful uniform and attracting crowds. In 1768 he helped financially by leasing the site of what is now John Street United Methodist Church in New York, bought the property in 1770, and lent the congregation \$15,000 at no interest. In 1767 he founded a society in Philadelphia, and in 1770, under his leadership, the society purchased the German Reformed Church in Philadelphia. Old Saint George's became the first large Methodist Church in America. During the Revolutionary War, Captain Webb returned to England along with many English Methodist preachers.

Asbury wrote, "My desire is to live in [Christian] love and peace with all men, to do them no harm, but all the good I can."

The greatness of these men and women in Methodism lies indisputably in their benefactions to mankind. Those who have greater talents are obligated to use them for the service of their fellow man. Greatness means greater obligation, as Jesus pointed out. Our inequalities involve not greater rights and privileges but great obligations and responsibilities as church members. We as Methodists are created by love—for love—to love. Modern Methodists must learn to get along together. We must muster ranks and move forward. We must stress our agreements and not our differences. We must magnify the great doctrines and traditions of our church. We must speak in terms of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). We must realize that the Holy Spirit is eager to lead Methodists in discernment of God's will. Ours is a feeble voice in the forum of the world's life, if we as Methodists cannot speak as united followers of Jesus Christ.

Wesley and all the saints mentioned in this sermon left us a legacy:

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill;
O may it all my powers engage,
To do my Master's will!

Arm me with jealous care,
As in thy sight to live,
And O, thy servant, Lord, prepare,
A strict account to give!

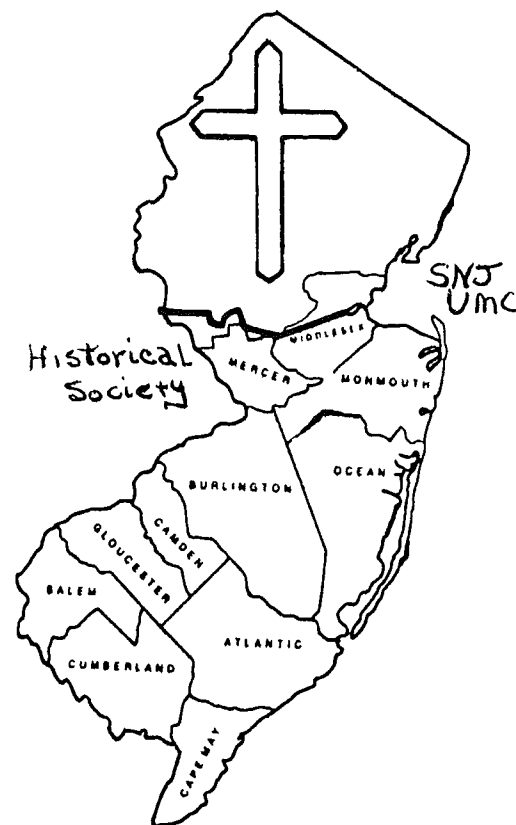
Help me to watch and pray,
And on thyself rely,
Assured, if I my trust betray,
I shall forever die.

Charles Wesley, 1762



HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Southern New Jersey Conference



The United Methodist Church

History

The present Conference Historical Society dates from 1927 and the organizing efforts of the Rev. Alfonso Dare, who served as president for 18 years. An earlier Society had been in existence from 1882 to 1913, but little is known of its work. The current Society was incorporated in 1937 and has done much to collect historical books and records relating to United Methodism and its churches within the bounds of the Southern New Jersey Conference. It served as the official historical agency of the Conference until the Commission on Archives and History was organized in 1969.

Purpose

The statement of purpose in the Society's constitution is "the study and preservation of the history of the Conference and its antecedents, and to assist and support the Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History in carrying out the Disciplinary duties, as requested."

Membership

All persons interested in the purposes of the Society may become members by the payment of annual dues or a contribution to a Life Membership in such amounts as the Society may direct. Current dues are \$5 per person per year, or \$8 per couple. The Benjamin Abbott Life Membership is available for individuals or churches for a one-time contribution of \$75. Officers of the Society are elected at an annual meeting to which all members are invited.

Membership Benefits

All members receive a copy of *The Historical Trail*, the yearbook of the Society, which has been published since 1962.

Invitations are extended to every member to participate in the annual meetings and Society-sponsored tours, plus other occasional special events.

Membership in the Society contributes to the ongoing preservation of the history of Southern New Jersey Methodism and to the dissemination of the knowledge of the same.

Members have the opportunity personally to volunteer some of their time to assist in the historical work of the Conference.

Conference Archives

The beginning task of assembling the records now housed in the Conference Historical Library and Archives Room now located on the campus of The Pennington School was begun by Rev. Alfonso Dare and the Historical Society at its inception in 1927. While these materials are now under the direct supervision of the Commission on Archives and History, Historical Society members may use the resources of the archives to do research, may volunteer to help in the room, and can be on the lookout for material to be placed in the archives for safe keeping.

Old Estellville Church

Since 1967 the Historical Society has been involved in maintaining the historic Old Estellville Methodist Church near Mays Landing in Atlantic County. Built in 1834, and now owned by the Conference, it is maintained by the Society through its Friends of Old Estellville Methodist Church Committee. It is opened for yearly anniversary services the afternoon and evening of the first Sunday in October and for other occasional services.

Membership Application**Southern New Jersey Conference Historical Society**

 Name

 Street Address or P.O. Box

 City

 State

 ZIP Code

☐ Minister

☐ Laity

☐ Yearly Dues—Individual (\$5.00)

☐ Yearly Dues—Couple (\$8.00)

☐ Benjamin Abbott Life Membership (\$75.00)

Send to

Mrs. Edna M. Molyneaux, Treasurer
 No. 71
 768 East Garden Road
 Vineland, New Jersey 08360

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Rev. Alfonso Dare	1927-1947
Rev. Dr. Frank B. Stanger	1947-1960
Rev. David C. Evans	1960-1967
Rev. Robert B. Steelman	1967-1976
Rev. Dr. J. Hillman Coffee	1976-1984
Mrs. Penny Moore	1984-1991
Mrs. Miriam L. G. Coffee	1991-

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<i>Vice-President</i>	Rev. Charles A. Green
<i>Secretary</i>	Mrs. Doreen M. Dyer
<i>Treasurer</i>	Mrs. Edna M. Molyneaux
<i>Chairman, Commission on Archives and History</i>	Rev. Christopher T. Dixon
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<i>Conference Historian; and Archivist, Northeastern Jurisdictional Commission on Archives and History</i>	Rev. Robert B. Steelman
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<i>Northwest District Representative</i>	Mr. Robert Heisler
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	Mrs. Dorothy A. S. Lang
<i>Representative, United Methodist Relay</i>	Rev. William J. Kingston, Jr.

Commission on Archives and History

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